

Word in Season:

BEING THE
COMMENTARY
OF

Dr. Martin Luther,

ON
Three SELECT PSALMS:

VIZ.

The CXXIVth, CXXVth, and CXXIXth.

WITH

His Commentary on some part of
the Fourth and Fifth Chapters of the
First Epistle of St. Peter.

Being of special Use for the present Times.

ECCLES. XII. 11.

*Words of the wise are goads, and as nails fastened by
the Masters of Assemblies, which are given from one
Shepherd.*

L O N D O N:

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T O T H E
R E A D E R.

Reader,

IT would be an unaccountable Presumption for me to commend to thy good Opinion the Author of the Commentary on the Psalms, and that part of St. Peters First Epistle, presented to thee in the following Sheets. If thou art a Protestant Christian, and indifferently acquainted with Authors, thou must acknowledge Dr. Martin Luther, a Worthy of the First Rank next the Apostles, if not the First also in that Rank; or stand by thy self, as some odd single Exception, from the stream of thy Profession. But if thou art a Roman Catholick, and so of a Denomination as contradictory to it self, as thy Papal Principles are to Truth, Reason, Sence, and Humane Society, I must not hope the Authors Name (than which, to those of thy Profession, none is more abhorred) will commend his Work to thy Perusal, much less thy Embraces.

That mighty Opposition which this Worthy met with
in

in his Successful Attempts of pulling down the Papal Tower, was an Exercise for such a Faith and Courage as the God of all Grace had filled him withal: And the Commentaries following express as much of both, as any of his Numerous Tracts. And this considered, with the sad Parallel of our Present Confusions, and their Causes, with those of his Days; Those very Remedies (animated with the same Spirit) are with much reason proposed for thy Support, under our present Calamities; if not also, as of some Tendency towards a Cure.

I doubt not but such who have not prostituted their Souls to their Sensuality, and their Religion to those who bid most, and the Church of Christ to the Lusts of Antichrist, will Accept and Approve of these Flowers out of Luther's Garden, as Eminently Seasonable, and to a Spiritual Palate, no less Savoury.

I have no further to acquaint thee with, but that this Commentary is according to the English Translation out of the Latin, Printed in the year 1615.

THE



THE
COMMENTARY
OF
Dr. MARTIN LUTHER,
Upon the
CXXIV PSALM.

Verf. 1. *If the Lord had not been on our side, &c.*

THIS Psalm is a Thanksgiving to God for his great mercy in preserving his People, placed (as the stories do shew) in the midst of the *Gentiles* and Heathen People, as a flock of Sheep in a wild Forrest, or in respect of the multitude, as a City compared to a mighty Kingdom, being compassed on every side with the Kings of the *Affyrians*, the *Egyptians*, the *Ammonites*, the *Ismaelites*, the *Moabites*; whom Satan had stirred up with deadly hatred, to vex and persecute them, seeking by all means to root them out from the Earth, that thereby he might utterly deface and abolish the Word and Worship of the Lord. This danger *David* saw, and thanked God which had preserved his People from the rage of so many Lyons and Dragons, which notwithstanding that they never ceased to seek their Destruction, yet all that they went about was in vain. And what a miracle was this, that this People could so long continue, notwithstanding the malice and rage of so many Devils? *David* therefore in this Psalm exhorteth his People to be

The Argument of the Psalm.

The People of Israel as a flock of Sheep among many Wolves.

B

thankful

A Commentary

thankful to the Lord their God so mightily preserving, defending and delivering them from the violence of so many Nations and Kingdoms, hating and persecuting them on every side.

Which Psalm we also do sing, not only against our adversaries which hate and persecute the Word, but also against spiritual Wickedness. For we are taught by the Gospel that there are now seven Devils which lye in wait for us, (whereas we were before in danger but of one) which cease not to stir up the whole World against us. Yet our Case were more tollerable if we had but only the World, and not Satan also with all his Angels and the gates of Hell, wholly bent against us. But yet further to molest and vex us; besides all these, we have also the third Enemy, which we carry always about with us, which we nourish also and foster at home with us, and even within us, the flesh I mean, which giveth us no rest, but continually tempteth us to Sin, fighteth against Faith, and striveth in our members against the Spirit.

Forasmuch then as the Church of God is never free from these dangers, let us also sing to the praise of Christ this Psalm: that he preserveth us his members from all these Enemies. For it were extream ingratitude not to acknowledge this miracle, that notwithstanding all these, the Church doth yet continue, and that there be some which truly teach and confess Christ, and believe in Christ, tho Satan rage, the World and false Brethren conspire against us, and the flesh (as an untamed Beast) fight against the Word and Faith never so much. This is the benefit then that David so highly extolleth, and wisheth that his People would understand and give thanks to God for the same.

Verse 1. *If the Lord had not been on our side, may Israel now say:*

Verse 2. *If the Lord had not been on our side, when men rose up against us,*

Verse 3. *They had then swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled against us.*

Here the Prophet *David* exhorteth the People to consider how mercifully God hath delivered them from the hands of their Enemies, and how miraculously he had preserved that Kingdom, and also to praise God with him for the same. Which words are not to be restrained to *David's* time only. For the Heathen People had oftentimes before warred against them with such Force and Power as was like to the rage of most huge and terrible floods of Water (whereof he speaketh here) ready to overflow them. Therefore seeing he mentioneth here no one kind of deliverance, it seemeth that he meaneth in these words of Thanksgiving to set forth whatsoever God had done for the succour and deliverance of his People at any time before. Wherein he sheweth (as it were in a glass) the dangerous state of the Church from the beginning, that the faithful may learn to know that it hath not been preserved by the strength and policy of man, but by the miraculous power and hand of God, and therefore in their troubles and afflictions should always flie to God for help and succour.

Israel signifieth the People of God. Let us acknowledge then that there is no way for Gods People to escape the hands of their Enemies, but by the help and power of God, and that he will have the glory and praise thereof to be given to him alone. This praise can none give unto God, but the true *Israel*, having experience both of their own weakness, the force and power of their Enemies, the dangers past, and of the merciful help and Protection of the Lord.

Verse 2. *If the Lord had not been on our side, when men rose up against us.*

This repetition is not in vain. For whilst we are in danger, our fear is without measure: but when it is once past, we imagine it to have been less then it was indeed. And this is the delusion of Satan, to diminish and obscure the Grace of God. *David* therefore with this repetition stirreth up the People to greater thankfulness unto God for his gracious Deliverance, and amplifieth the dangers which they had

passed. Whereby we are taught how to think of our troubles and afflictions past, least the sense and feeling of Gods Grace vanish out of our minds. And here note, how God dealeth with his People in their distress, who suffereth their Enemies so far to prevail over them, and deferreth his help so long, till it seem impossible for them to escape: so that they are compelled to confess and acknowledge, that they must needs have perished if the mighty hand of God had not delivered them. These two things then we see the *Israelites* here to acknowledge: first, That the Lord was on their side, that is, succoured and delivered them; then also that it had not been possible but they must utterly have perished, if God had not preserved and defended them.

By *men* is here understood whatsoever is great and mighty in the world; as if he said: We are counted as abjects and outcasts of the world. The Princes, the Rulers, the Wise, the Rich of the world rise up against us, to destroy us and to root us out from the face of the earth. If ye behold with how great and how many Kingdoms we are compassed about, which bear a deadly hatred against us, we may seem like to a silly Sheep compassed about with a multitude of cruel Wolves, every moment ready to devour it. That we live in safety therefore, and that our Enemies prevail not against us, acknowledge it to be the great mercy of God, O *Israel*, which so miraculously preserveth and defendeth so small a flock.

In like manner we are compelled to say and confess at this day, that if God did not miraculously defend and preserve his Church, the Power of Satan is so great, that one of his Angels is able in one moment to destroy us all, that either teach or profess Christ, and to fill the World with bloodshed and slaughter. We see the Princes, the Pope, the Prelates, the mighty and wealthy of the World, yea the whole world in a manner bent to destroy us. Against whom what have we to defend us, but that the Lord of Hosts hath stretched out his mighty arm over us, which as a brazen wall, defendeth us against all the cruel darts which both Satan and the world do dayly cast against us? That we live then, that we teach, and you hear the word, that we have

have place and liberty in the Church so to do, these things Satan cannot abide, and therefore he raiseth the gates of Hell against us; notwithstanding he is compelled to suffer all these things through the power of Christ our King, who sitteth at the right hand of God; for by mans strength and power these things could not be retained and defended. If Satan then at any time have his will in troubling the Church, in murdering the people of God, and such like, therefore it is, because God would shew what Satan is able to do every moment if he were not resisted by the almighty power of God, to the end that we should walk in the fear of God, and acknowledging this inestimable benefit, continually pray unto God for the same. Let us learn then to sing with *David*: *If the Lord had not been on our side, &c.* whose mighty hand hath defended us, whose power alone hath preserved us. And although the world rage against us, though Satan vex us never so sore, they cannot hurt us. *Be of good comfort* (saith Christ our Saviour) *for I have overcome the world.* Again; *I give unto them everlasting life, and none shall take them out of my hand.*

Verse 3. *They had then swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.*

In these words he expresseth, not only the strength, rage, and cruelty of the enemies: but also how weak and unable the Israelites were to withstand them. And here he useth a similitude taken of fierce and outrageous beasts, whose property is, when they have taken their Preys, to swallow them up alive. Likewise when we would express the cruelty or malice of any towards us, we are wont to say: He hateth me so deadly, that he could find in his heart to eat me, or swallow me up quick. The Prophet meaneth then that their enemies were so many and so mighty, that they needed no armour or weapons to destroy them, but were able, like fierce and cruel beasts, to swallow them up alive, being so weak and so little a flock.

Verse 4. *Then the Waters had drowned us, and the stream had gone over our soul.*

Terrible is the rage of fire, but much more terrible is the violence and rage of water, for that no power can resist. Now, saith *David*, like as huge and mighty floods of water carried with great power and violence, do suddenly overthrow and bear down whatsoever they meet withall: even such is the rage of the enemies of Gods Church, which no power of man is able to withstand. Therefore let us learn to trust to the Lords defence and succour. For what else is the Church, but as a little boat tyed by a River side, and by violence of the water soon carried away? Or as a Reed which by force of the stream is easily plucked up and carried away? Such was the people of *Israel* in *Davids* time, being compared to the Gentiles round about them. Such is the Church likewise at this day, compared to the adversaries. Such is every one of us in respect of the force and power of the malignant spirit. We are like a Reed which is easily plucked up: and he like a raging flood which with great might and violence overthroweth and carrieth away all things. We are like a withered leaf, soon blown from the tree; and he like a mighty wind or tempest, not onely blowing down leaves, but plucking up and overthrowing trees and all. What are we then poor wretches able to do of our own power and strength for our defence? We must learn therefore by faith wholly to rest upon the word. For what is our victory but even our faith? Albeit that armour and munitions have their place, yet can they nothing help at all, unless we have a trust and affiance in the Lord, who hath promised to be our God, our strength, and our defence: whose power is such, whose mighty arm also is stretched out for the defence of his, that albeit never so great a tempest or violent rage of water should invade the poorest and simplest cottage that can be, it forceth not. Let this be then our assured trust, let this be the rock of our safety, help and succour, that God will be our defender and keeper, that the great floods and mighty waters carry us not away. This sure defence and mighty protection

tion of our God, the wicked neither know nor believe; for they attribute all their success and welfare to their own strength, wisdom, and riches. But *Solomon*, albeit he was a King abundantly endued with all these things, yet saith he: *Except the Lord build the house, the builders labour in vain: Except the Lord keep the City, they watch in vain that keep it.*

Verse 5. *Then had the swelling waters gone over our soul.*

He setteth out yet more lively and as it were before their eyes, the great danger from the which God had delivered them. And this vehement kind of speech which he useth here, had as great force to make the faithful to feel from what terrible destruction they were delivered by the mighty hand of God, as if their danger had been present before their eyes, and so to become more thankful to God for the same. For he is thankful to God indeed for his deliverance and safety, which doth acknowledge that before his deliverance he saw nothing else but utter destruction.

Note who
are most
thankfull.

Thus *David* setteth out the afflictions and calamities of the Church and of the godly, whom the world doth not only hate, but cruelly persecute. Whereby we may see that it hath not only a greedy desire, but also power to hurt, murder and destroy. Satan likewise goeth about like a raging Lyon, seeking whom he may devour. Besides these, there are great and horrible sins sticking in our flesh. That we fall not therefore every moment into desperation, or otherwise perish, it is because he is greater which is in us, then he which is in the world, or the whole world besides, as *David* saith: *If God had not been with us, our enemies had swallowed us up alive.* Now he addeth a notable similitude, wherewith he amplifieth the danger of the godly, and power of the wicked.

Verse 6. *Praised be the Lord, which hath not given us as a Prey unto their Teeth.*

He exhorteth the faithful to be thankful for their deliverance,

rance, and expresseth unto them, how and (as it were) with what words they should declare this thankfullness. Wherein he setteth forth yet further by another similitude, that it could not be but they must utterly have perished, if God had not miraculously defended them. For they were, saith he, no otherwise preserved, then as if a man should violently take a Prey out of the jaws of a raging and cruel beast. As if he said, We were indeed like silly sheep, and as a Prey ready to be devoured of cruel beasts: but praised be the Lord our God, which would not suffer us so to perish. He saith not: *which hath delivered us*: albeit he did indeed mightily deliver them: but, *which hath not given us as a Prey, &c.* For this is it which specially the Holy Ghost here setteth forth, that the wicked cannot hurt the godly, be they never so many, mighty, furious, cruell and terrible, like to raging and violent waters, like to cruel and outrageous beasts, falling upon them with open mouth, except the Lord give them into their hands. Let us therefore with *David* sing praises unto the Lord our God, which keepeth and defendeth us, that the raging and cruel beasts which have sharpened their teeth to devour us, cannot hurt us. Without this merciful protection of our God, there is no way to stand against Satan and his cruell members the space of one moment.

Verse 7. *Our Soul is escaped even as a bird out of the snare of the Fowler: The snare is broken, and we are delivered.*

He amplifieth yet further by a third similitude, the great perills and dangers of the faithful, being in the hands of their enemies, as a bird that is taken in the snare is in the hands of the fouler; and yet notwithstanding they escaped by the mighty power of God, no otherwise then the bird that is delivered out of the snare of the fouler. By the snare is here to be understood as well the fraud and subtilty of the enemies, whereby the Israelites were brought into thraldom and captivity, as also the strength and power wherewith they were long oppressed. So that they had not onely to do with Bloody and Cruel Enemies, but also were

were entrapped and snared by fraud and subtilty, and with might and power miserably oppressed. Thus being unable both in Strength and Policy to withstand their Enemies, they were every way in danger of Death and Destruction: whereby it appeareth that they were miraculously delivered.

And here have we an Image of our spiritual Thralldom and Captivity under Satan, in whose snares we were once most miserably wrapped. Now therefore that we are delivered by the inestimable benefit of Christ, let us acknowledge both our former Calamity, and the Liberty of this Grace wherein we stand, and let us beware that we cast not our selves into the snares of servile Bondage any more. For Satan sleepeth not, but lyeth continually in wait for us, ready to draw us into those snares again, out of the which by the great mercy of God we were delivered: yea and sometimes is suffered to hurt either our Bodies or Souls, not only to shew us that he is able likewise to destroy both Body and Soul, if God did so permit: but also to stir us up to Faith and Prayer, that we should call upon him for Aid and Succour against these perillous Snares, and being delivered, should give him thanks and praise for the same.

Moreover, every Tentation is a Snare, whether it be of the Flesh or Spirit. Persecution, Torments, Imprisonment, Slander, diseases and infirmities of the Body, be snares; which as they are permitted of God to exercise and strengthen our Faith: so by the malice of Satan they are wrought to afflict and to vex men, that he may bring them to infidelity and desperation, and so into the Snares of eternal Death. From the which Snares, but by the special Grace of God, there is no way to escape.

Thus our life lyeth always open to the Snares of Satan, and we as silly Birds are like at every moment to be carried away. The Snares
of Satan. Notwithstanding the Lord maketh a way for us to escape. Yea when Satan seemeth to be most sure of us, by the mighty Power of God the Snares are broken, and we are delivered. Experience hereof we have in those which are inwardly afflicted, and with heaviness of Spirit grievously oppressed; that when they seem to be in utter Despair, and ready (as you would say) now to perish, yet even at the last pinch, and in the uttermost Extremity, cometh the sweet Comfort of Gods holy Spirit, and raiseth them up again. When we are most ready to perish, then is

C

God

Psal. 94.

God most ready to help. *Except the Lord had holpen me (saith David) my Soul had almost dwelt in silence.*

Verse 8. *Our help is in the Name of the Lord who hath made both Heaven and Earth.*

The Name
of the Lord
is our only
Sanctuary and
succour in all
afflictions.

This is the Conclusion of Thanksgiving, containing a worthy sentence of great Comfort, that against Sin, the horreur of Death, and other Dangers, there is no other help or safety but only *the Name of the Lord*. If that were not (*saith he*) we should fall into all manner of Sin, Blasphemy, Errors, and into all kind of Calamities. But our help is in the Name of the Lord, which preserveth our Faith and our Life against the Devil and the World. And as ye heard in the other Verses before, so he sheweth in this verse also, that God suffereth his Saints to be tempted, and in their Tentation to fall into great Distress, as even now ready to be drowned and swallowed up presently with great floods of Water: yet notwithstanding this Comfort he sheweth them, that he will not utterly forsake them. By the which Examples we may learn to know the Will of the Lord, and to seek our help and safety at his hands, which suffereth his People to be exercised in the Furnace of *Egypt*, not to their utter Destruction, but only to kill the old man with his vain hope and confidence which he hath in his own strength. This is the cause why God suffereth his People to be exercised. For it is not hearing, reading, talking, or teaching, nor Speculation only which maketh a Christian man, but Practice is that which specially is required in a true Christian, that is to say, the Cross, to pluck down the flesh and bring it to nothing; That man, despairing of his own strength, and seeing no succour in himself, should resign himself wholly unto the Lord, looking with Patience and Hope for help at his hand: for this is the Will of God. Neither must we imagine to our selves any other God then such an one as will help the afflicted and oppressed with Desperation and other Calamities. To know this Doctrine is one piece of the victory. For they that know it not when Tentation assaileth them, either do despair or seek other helps. Let us learn then out of this Psalm, that it is the Will of God to exercise his Saints with troubles and afflictions: Who suffereth great floods
of

of Water to run over their heads : who also permitteth them to fall into the Snares of the Wicked, and tryeth every Way, not to destroy them, but to shew them what they are of themselves, and so to teach them to trust in his saving health. But the flesh looketh to the power and multitude of the Adversaries, and her own infirmity : but to look unto God, and to hope for his help and succour, it is not able.

Wherefore this is a necessary Conclusion : *Our help is in the Name of the Lord.* It is a short-Sentence, but it setteth forth most worthy Doctrine and Consolation : whereof specially in these latter days we have great need, seeing the Pope, together with the greatest part of the Princes and Rulers of the World, so cruelly do persecute the Doctrine of the Gospel. In respect of these huge Mountains, what are we small Moles? Yea tho there were no Force nor Power of man for us to fear, how are we able to stand against, not only so many Devils, but even the very gates of Hell also? And yet this Experience we have of the great Mercy and Goodness of the Lord our God, that when we are even in their hands, and never so much oppressed, yet are we not forsaken, but are safe through our Confidence and trust in his Help. But to this Wisdom it is impossible for us to attain without continual afflictions : whereby it is necessary that the confidence of all worldly succours should be beaten down. For vexation and trouble bringeth Understanding (as *Isaiah* saith,) whereby we are compelled to cry ; *Help Lord, for else we perish.* So in the last hour when Death approacheth, there is nothing wherein mans Heart can repose it self or find Comfort, but his trust and confidence in the help of the Lord ; There is rest and quietness, there is perfect Peace. He that can then say, *My Help is in the Name of the Lord,* dyeth happily, and is out of all danger. Thus we may learn what it is to have and enjoy God, even to rest in the sure trust of his merciful help and succour in all dangers. These are the Words therefore of a victorious and triumphing Faith : *Our help is in the name of the Lord which made Heaven and Earth.* As if he said : The maker of Heaven and Earth is my God and my helper. Shew me a God (O ye my Adversaries) like unto him. What are your snares and your traines then, compared unto this God? What are your threatnings, your Power, your Policies? &c.

The fruit of afflictions.

Thus he setteth the Eternal God, the maker of Heaven and Earth, against all terrours and dangers, against the floods and overflowings of all tentations, and swalloweth up as it were with on breath, all the raging furies of the whole World, and of Hell it self, even as a little drop of Water is swallowed up of a mighty flaming fire. And what is the World with all his Force and Power, in respect of him which made Heaven and Earth? Let the World fret then, let it rage, so that this succour never fail us. And if it be the Will of God that we shall suffer trouble and affliction, yet in him we shall overcome at length.

THE
C O M M E N T A R Y
O F
Dr. *MARTIN LUTHER*,
Upon the
CXXV P S A L M.

They that trust in the Lord, &c.

The argu-
ment of the
Psalm.

THE Psalm going before, is a Thanksgiving or a Sacrifice of Praise, because the Godly see, and by experience feel that the Lord is faithful and helpeth them in the time of need. This Psalm following containeth also, in a manner, the same matter: For it pertaineth to the Doctrine of Faith, and exhorteth the Faithful likewise to a sure trust and assiance in the help of the Lord

Lord in all their necessities : Whereunto he stirreth them up with great and excellent promises. It may also be easily understood by that which we have said before. For herein consisteth all this Heavenly Wisdom, that we do utterly remove out of our sight, whatsoever flesh can comprehend, and believe that which the Word only telleth us, even against all that which either we know, feel, or see : And therefore this Wisdom is against all humane Wisdom and Reason. For by Reason, and all that Reason can comprehend, we feel, see, and conceive all things contrary to that which Faith leadeth us unto.

He that lyeth sick at the point of Death, can by Reason conceive nothing else but the imagination of Death. But a Christian man leaving his imagination, knoweth that in Death there is true Life. But thou wilt say : He seeth and feeleth Death indeed, but Life he cannot feel. I Answer, that because he resteth upon the Word, and after it he judgeth, and not after his own feeling, therefore even in Death he seeth nothing but Life, and in the midst of Darkness most clear light. For like as God maketh all things of nothing, and of darkness light : so he worketh by his Word, that in Death there is nothing but life. They then which stick to the Word and Promise of God, and follow the same, do find it true which *David saith, He spake the Word and it was done, &c.* But before we can come to this experience, we must abide some trouble, and therefore have need of such exhortation as this Psalm here setteth forth.

The power
of the Word.
Psalm. 33.

Verse 1. *They that trust in the Lord, shall be as Mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but remaineth for ever.*

The Prophet useth here a similitude of Mount *Sion*, because *Jerusalem* wherein *Sion* stood, when the Temple was builded had most ample and notable promises of God (as appeareth in very many places of the Prophets) that it should stand sure and invincible for ever against all troubles and Calamities, for that the Lord had his abiding and dwelling there; according to that promise where he saith, *Here is my rest, here will I dwell, &c.* And therefore *David* in another Psalm glorieth on this wise : *Lo, the Kings were gathered and went together, when they saw it, they marvelled; They were astonied and suddenly driven back.* As we
may

Psalm. 48.

may see it came to pass under *Ezechias* in the great Destruction of the *Assyrians* and other Kings, as the stories witness; which shew that *Jerusalem* remained safe in all dangers, not by strength and Policy of the inhabitants, but by the miraculous Work of God dwelling in it, and thus mightily preserving and beautifying his own Common-wealth.

To hope and trust in the Lord, is the greatest Service that we can do to him.

The Nature of Faith.

Now therefore, saith he, like as Mount *Sion* and our Holy City *Jerusalem* is never moved, but remaineth sure and safe by the mighty protection of the Lord in all Extremities: so he that trusteth in the Lord shall be defended against the furious Rage of the World and the Gates of Hell for ever. Note how he commandeth no Work here to be done, as in Popery, in the time of trouble men were taught to enter into some kind of Religion, to fast, to go on Pilgrimage, and to do such other foolish Works of Devotion, which they devised, as an high Service unto God, and thereby thought to make Condigne Satisfaction for Sin, and merit Eternal Life; but simply he leadeth us the plain Way unto God, pronouncing this to be the chiefest Anchor of our Salvation, only to hope and trust in the Lord, and that this is the greatest Service that we can do unto God. For this is the Nature of God (as I have said) to create all things of nothing. Therefore he createth and bringeth forth in Death Life; in Darkness, Light: And this to believe, is the very Nature and most special Property of Faith. When God then seeth such a one as agreeth with his own Nature, that is, which believeth to find in Danger, Help; in Poverty, Riches; in Sin, Righteousness; and that for Gods own Mercies sake in Christ alone; him can God neither hate nor forsake. For he serveth and worshipeth God truly which putteth his whole trust in the Mercy of God. With this Service God is highly pleased, because he delighteth of nothing to make something. So he made the World of nothing: so he raiseth up the Poor and Oppressed; so he justifieth the Sinner; so he raiseth the Dead; and so he saveth the Damned. Who so then consenteth to Gods Nature, and obeyeth his Will, there hoping for something where nothing is, he it is that pleaseth God, and shall never be moved.

But thou must beware that thou imagine not to thy self a false Hope, contrary to the Word of God and thy Vocation. Whereof if thou be certain, and abide in the same, if troubles rise,

rise, trust in the Lord; and if he help not in his good time, take me and *David* also for Lyars. Satan will trouble, vex and discomfort thee, yea and peradventure make thee to believe that thou art utterly forsaken; but if thou trust in the Lord, thou shalt feel his help with joyful Victory. So in the Council of *Auspurge* when the Princes were bent against us with one consent, our cause seemed to be utterly overthrown. Notwithstanding yet we live and enjoy such Peace and Liberty as we would wish, maugre the Rage and Malice of the Pope and all the Adversaries of the World. With such Conflicts we must be exercised least we be discouraged when we see our cause begin to quail. But the greater the danger is, the more stedfastly we must trust. So shall it come to pass that when we are overcome, yet we shall overcome, and the Conqueror shall yield unto us Triumph and Victory.

This is it that the Psalm here setteth forth: *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but remaineth for ever.* And here we have a singular promise, whereby we are assured that we shall stand and abide for ever. If then we do not continue, it is our own fault, because we abide not firm and stable in our Faith: For this promise must needs remain sure and infallible. Yea as it is impossible that God should deny himself, and not be God: so is it impossible that he should forsake those that put their trust in him. But we may not think the time long, but patiently abide the Lords Leisure. For Gods power taketh no place in us until we be utterly (to speak after the manner of the Scripture) exinated, that is, stript naked of all Worldly Hope and Helps that man hath in himself, and brought to nothing: like as when he saveth a ship from drowning, now ready to perish, and past all Remedy; As the two Stories of the Gospel, one of the Ship, the other of the danger of *Peter*, do testifie.

Verse 2. *As the Mountains are about Jerusalem, so is the Lord about his People, from henceforth and for ever.*

Where many hundred thousands of men are, there are scarcely seven thousand which know God, or believe in God, and yet for their sakes the whole Multitude is called Gods people.

Even

Jerusalem called holy by the figure Synecdoche where a part is taken for the whole.

Even so was it in *Jerusalem*. Albeit the greater part was Wicked and Godless, yet was *Jerusalem* called Holy, not only in Respect of a small Number of the Godly ; but also because God had his abiding there. So when there was not one just person in *Sodom* but *Lot* with his two Daughters, yet could not the Angel destroy *Sodom* with fire so long as *Lot* was in it. Likewise where four or five or ten godly Persons are to be found, for their sakes the whole City is called Holy. For these are the Elect corner stones, these are the precious Pearls which God so highly esteemeth, and for whose sakes he spareth the Wicked. Therefore saith *David*, As *Jerusalem* is compassed about with Mountains, so doth the Lord compass his People and mightily defend them on every side. In like manner *Zachary* Prophecyeth of a City whose Wall is of fire. These Similitudes do set forth unto us the Safety of Gods People, that weak and little poor Flock, against all Dangers. Upon this promise if we also do rest, which at this day enjoy the inestimable Benefit of Gods Holy Word, we shall be defended against the Rage of Satan and the whole World, not by fiery and brazen Walls, but by the Lord himself. These things albeit we cannot comprehend, yet should we believe them so certainly as if we did see them with our bodily Eyes. If we should see our selves compassed about with brazen and fiery Walls, we would be without all fear, and Triumph against Satan. But it is a matter of Faith, not to trust unto that which the Eyes see, but which the Word offereth and promiseth. This one thing therefore is lacking in us, that we have not eyes of the Spirit, but we judge according to the eyes and sense of the Flesh. For else we should be no more afraid then they which being closed within the Walls of an invincible Castle, fear not the force and power of their Enemies, be they never so terrible. We must not doubt therefore, but if we believe, we are compassed about with fiery and brazen Mountains, that is to say, we abide for ever invincible against the Rage of Satan and all the Powers of Darkness. Blessed therefore is he that believeth.

These Mountains are the Angels, which compass us on every side, that Satan with his Angels and Ministers cannot hurt us as he would ; Whose Malice and Power is such, that if they did not continually behold us, continually defend us and watch over

over us, he would destroy us every moment. This can all they
testifie which know that Satan is a Murtherer and a Lyar, which
cannot abide to see the godly prosper, and therefore he seeketh
by all means to root them out from the face of the Earth. That
we are not then utterly consumed, it is the benefit of these
Mountains, by whom we are so compassed and defended. Some-
times Satan hurleth his Darts at us as it were through the win-
dow, to destroy us, and worketh us indeed some sorrow, but he
cannot move us.

This similitude seemeth to be taken out of the Story of *Helizem*
in the second book of the *Kings*, where the servant of *He-*
lizem saw the Hills about him full of fiery Chariots, and Horse-
men compassing *Helizem* round about, and mightily defending
him. This succour which the Servant of *Helizem* saw, and the
Prophet believed, when he saw nothing, is saith the Prophet,
round about all them which trust in the Lord: as also the 34
Psalm witnesseth; *The Angel of the Lord pitcheth round about*
them that fear him. But our eyes are shut up and see not these mi-
racles, whereof notwithstanding we have daily experience.

This promise then will never deceive us; only let us not de-
ceive our selves. If therefore we did believe, no doubt, we
should sleep, we should live, we should die, yea (that more is)
we should suffer whatsoever Satan and the world can do against
us, without all fear. For thus should we think, if I suffer any
thing, it is not without the Will of God, nor without good
cause, well known, tho' not unto me, yet unto God. Therefore
although Satan break through the wall in one place, yet shall he
never be able utterly to overthrow it altogether. Thus should
we think in our troubles and afflictions, and comfort our selves
with the good Will of God. But we are afraid when any trou-
ble cometh, and never feel that security which Faith bringeth.
Thus do we worthily suffer the punishment of our infidelity
which we nourish within us, although we be called away from it
by so many notable places of Scripture.

Besides all this, it is not enough that we are compassed about
with fiery Walls, that is, with the sure Custody, the continual
Watch and Ward of the Angels, but the Lord himself is our
Wall: so that every way we are defended by the Lord against
all Dangers. Above us he is a Heaven, on both sides he is as a
D Wall,

Wall, under us he is as a strong Rock whereupon we stand: so are we every way sure and safe. Now, if Satan through these munitions cast his darts at us, it must needs be that the Lord himself shall be hurt before we take harm. But great is our incredulity, which hear all these things in vain. Yet must they be taught and learned, least the time come that we be destitute of all Counsel and Comfort in these matters. For certain it is that the hour shall come when we must have experience of these things, or else utterly perish.

Where he addeth, *From henceforth and for ever*. By these words he sheweth that this vigilancy of the Lord our God over us, is not temporal, but eternal, according to that which he said before in the first verse of this Psalm. *They shall remain for ever*. Let us learn therefore out of this Psalm, that our Constancy and perseverance consisteth in this, that we are defended by the Power and Providence of the Lord on every side.

Verse 3. *For the rod of the Wicked shall not rest on the lot of the Righteous, lest the Righteous put forth their hand unto Wickedness.*

Here the Prophet plainly declareth, that the People which rest under this Defence and Protection, are afflicted and subject to all Miseries and Calamities as touching the flesh; altho' they be compassed about with such high and mighty Mountains as touching the Spirit, as Satan can never surmount, yet touching the Flesh and the Old man, they lye open on every side to the Darts of Satan and the World; For God by these means will afflict and exercise the Flesh, that Sin and the foolishness of the Flesh may be mortified in them, and that spiritual Wisdom and the inward man may increase. This is the cause why we are according to the Flesh, as a broken Hedge, and as a City whose Walls are cast down, and so lyeth open to the Enemies on every side. Wherefore there is no sort of men so vile and abject which do not think that they may do what they list against the true Professors of the Gospel. Hereof come such intollerable injuries, horrible blasphemies, cruel torments and bloody slaughters of the Saints of God. For the Flesh hath no Walls, no Munitions to defend it, but the Spirit. Therefore the flesh is in danger

danger to all Storms and Tempests, broken and troden down of the wicked, as *Isaiah* saith. Chap. 51. Which have said unto thy Soul; Bow down that we may go over. Thou hast layed thy Body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over. These afflictions we must needs suffer and by patience overcome them, and withal we must beware that by these outward afflictions the inward man be not weakened or overcome; resting in this assured hope and trust, that the Lord will never forsake us, but that we are in the bosom of the Father, and are closed within most sure and strong holds. So that now, altho' our Goods, our Wives, our Children, yea and our Lives also be taken from us, yet we shall never be spoiled of our Christ, by whom we are so surely defended, that in the midst of all our Tentations he will make a way for us to escape, or else give us strength to bear them.

Thus we see what Consolations the Holy Ghost setteth forth unto them which believe the Word. For unto such as look for a better Life then this, all things are here full of Calamities and Miseries. Death followeth Death, as *Paul* saith, and we continually die. One Tentation followeth another, until at the length by the Death of the Flesh all miseries shall cease and have an end. This verse therefore maketh much for our Comfort, admonishing us that we must suffer many troubles; yet so, that at the length we shall be safe and set at Liberty from them all, though not in this Life, yet in the Life to come, and in Eternal Life. And why should we not thus boldly promise unto our selves, remaining under this diligent Custody of the Angels, yea of the Lord himself, which is always round about his People? But here (as before I said) we have need of Faith, that we may judge herein, not according to our present troubles and tentations, but according to the Word of Promise. And what should we need any promises if there were no tentations? which tentations whether they be within in the Spirit, or without in the flesh, the time shall come when we through Christ shall have full victory hereof, as this verse full of sweet Consolation doth promise unto us.

Notwithstanding this promise seemeth incredible both to us which suffer, and also to them which persecute and afflict us. For if we behold the same with our outward eyes, what can be

more false? yea the contrary seemeth to be most true. Behold our Saviour Christ, was he not so forsaken, hanging upon the Cross, that the Rod or Scepter of the wicked rested upon him? Did it not rest likewise upon the Prophets, the Apostles, and other holy Martyrs? This matter then, if we consider it with our outward eyes, hath another meaning then the Words do import. For they promise that the Scepter of the wicked shall have no power over the godly, and yet all stories and examples do testify the contrary. Therefore the Holy Ghost calleth us back to the purpose and Counsel of God revealed in his Word, and commandeth us to weigh and consider, not what we suffer and with our outward eyes behold, but what is decreed with the Lord in Heaven. And he that can so sequester himself from the beholding of his afflictions and tentations, and yield himself wholly over to the Will of God, and there rest, is a right Divine; yea he that is ignorant hereof, in true Divinity knoweth nothing at all. For what knoweth he which is ignorant that God is such a God as will not suffer the godly to be oppressed of the wicked? For seeing he hath said, *I am the Lord thy God*, he will never suffer that which is his own, to be wrested either by the World or by the gates of Hell out of his hands. If he then abide and continue, they shall also continue for ever which are his. Thus to believe, and thus to lay hold on things invisible, is true Divinity and true spiritual Wisdom indeed, whereupon we may ground this Proposition out of the invisible Counsel of God; God hateth the wicked, and loveth the just, *ergo* he will damn and destroy the wicked, and will deliver and save the just. And here we see that which is the chiefest thing in all the Psalms and Prophets, to spring of the first Precept: *I am the Lord thy God*.

Now have we to learn how we may apply this verse rightly and to our Comfort. For true Divinity consisteth in use and practice. We are vexed on every side with cruel Bishops, wicked Princes, and others which hate the Word of God and the Doctrine which we profess. But these are very trifles, if ye compare them with those vexations which Satan, Sin, and our own infirmity raise up in our Consciences. We must learn therefore thus to judge of all these things, that they are the Rod and Scepter of the wicked, and to set the Lord against them, revealing

ing his Will here in his Word, and pronouncing that he will not suffer the Scepter of the wicked to rest upon the godly. Seeing then the same Prince promiseth thus much unto us which hath all things in his hand, what can we require more? For the Will of God is certain, that though he suffer us to be afflicted, yet will he not see us troden under foot or perish. Thus must we apply these sweet Consolations.

What the rod signifieth in the Scripture it is well known. Children when they are young, are corrected with a rod; and when they wax bigger, with a Wand or Cudgel; and if they will not so amend, then followeth the Iron rod. Hereof it cometh that the rod signifieth all Power and Rule, which is for the Amendment and Correction of such as do offend. So it is taken in the 110 Psalm. *The Lord shall send forth the rod of thy Power out of Sion*: That is to say, thy Kingdom; For there he signifieth such a rod whereby Kingdoms and People are governed. On this wise the holy Ghost permitteth here to the wicked, Dominion and Tyranny over the godly, which they are compelled to suffer. Like as we are compelled not only to see but also to suffer the Tyranny of Antichrist and the Power of his Kingdom, persecuting, destroying and murdering the Christians, and raging against them with all kind of Tyranny. Yea we are Compelled moreover to suffer the Tyranny of Satan vexing and terrifying my Heart and the Hearts of the Brethren which believe in Christ. This Dominion or Tyranny the Holy Ghost calleth the rod of the wicked; and comforteth us, that as the Lord liveth, their Tyranny shall fall, and shall not rest upon the Lot of the godly.

The lot of the just is as much to say as the Portion, that is, the Number or Congregation of the just. Like as Christ calleth them the *Little Flock*, and *Paul, The poor Saints*. Over these, saith he, although the Tyrants do rule, yet shall not their power endure. Although the Persecutors of the Church do oppress the faithful, yet shall they not do so always, neither shall their Counsels have the success which they desire. For they think to root out this Doctrine for ever; but that shall they never be able to do. Therefore albeit ye suffer in the mean time, saith the Holy Ghost, yet know ye, that my will is, *That they which believe in me shall never perish, but shall be preserved to Life Everlasting.*

lasting. Here then have ye whereunto ye may trust in all your Tentrations.

But behold the reason which the Holy Ghost here useth to prove that the Scepter of the wicked shall not rest upon the just. God is moved saith he, to help and defend the just. For else it might so come to pass that God should have no Church at all, and the just should put forth their hands to Wickedness. So we find in *Jeremiah*, that before the People were delivered into the hands of the *Babylonians*, they had promise that after seventy years they should return again to *Jerusalem*, because they should not be brought into doubt of Gods Mercy, and so utterly despair, and falling away from God should turn to Gentilism; as it is in the Psalm, least the godly should turn to foolishness, that is to say, should blaspheme and become impatient. This is the cause why God joyneth the promise of the Word with the Execution and Performance of the Deed; or else the godly should be driven to Desperation. We see how many are cast down with Adversity by the loss of Goods, Wife, Children, and other things which are dear unto them. Except therefore their minds were raised up again and comforted, first, with the Word and Promise, and then, with the Performance and Execution of the same, many would say there were no God. Therefore God must needs shew himself to be a God, not only in Word but also in Deed.

David had great promises of God, and yet by his own Son he was driven out of his Kingdom, and so persecuted that he was compelled to fly away barehead and barefoot. This was a sore Tentrations. Wherefore the great and ample Promises made unto him could never have raised him up and comforted him again, except God had indeed delivered him out of this great misery and affliction. Even so if we had no more but the promises of God to support us against the Papists and Adversaries of the Word, yea if God did not indeed fight for us and defend us against their Tyranny, we should be swallowed up with sorrow, and brought even to Desperation. God therefore worketh both ways; he raiseth up with the Word and Promise, and delivereth out of troubles and afflictions by Execution of the deed, that according to the saying of *St. Paul*, the tentation should not be above our strength, but should have an end, and we learn by

by our own Experience that the first Commandment, *I am the Lord thy God*, is most certain and infallible. Therefore when he saith, *Least the just should put forth their hand to Wickedness*, it is as much as if he should say, Least the just should turn away from God and fall to Gentilism. For God hath a double care over the Faithful; first, that they be not overcome, but may overcome the temptation; and this he doth by the Word and Promise. The second is that the temptation be not perpetual. Even so must we be undoubtedly perswaded, that besides the infallible promises which we have of the good Will of God towards us, and in the end of Everlasting Life, we shall be also delivered, and our Adversaries destroyed, albeit we can see no manner of way or possible means how it may be done. This is it then that this verse here setteth forth, that God is so careful for the safety of his People, that he seemeth to fear least they should put forth their hand to Wickedness, and fall away from him, whereby it might come to pass that he should have no People, and so there should be no God. For God is the God of the living, and therefore he must needs have a People. Wherefore there must ever be some remaining which may praise and worship Him. If there must needs be such a Number remaining, God must of necessity make an end also of tentations.

But here we must beware that we do not appoint the time of this deliverance. For before that come, God will have us tried to the uttermost, and brought to that Extremity, that all our hope and trust shall be utterly spent, and we at the point of Desperation. Now, when we are brought into this case that we can see nothing but Desperation, then, even then God sendeth Comfort, in Death, he sheweth Life; and even in Damnation, he bringeth Salvation: briefly, of nothing he maketh all things, and when all hope of Remedy is past, then beginneth he to work, and frameth all new again in most perfect wise. Thus cannot the God of this World do. This is the singular work of God therefore, that when thou thinkest thy self clean cast away and utterly forlorn, even then thou shouldst be most sure and safe, and most gloriously shine as the day Star in the Firmament. These things are easily taught, but by Experience we find and feel how far they pass all Reason and Power of man, and how hardly we can believe that God maketh all things of nothing, that

Old things
are passed a-
way; behold
all things are
become new.

that he is careful for us, whether we be afflicted in the Flesh or in the Spirit, and that he is more mindful of our deliverance then we our selves can be. These things therefore must be often and diligently taught, that we may learn that Heavenly Wisdom which the first Commandment setteth forth unto us, namely, that our God is such an one as of old things is wont to make new; of poor, to make rich; of despised, glorious. And this last we would all gladly have, but that will not be, except Contempt and Poverty go before.

Here have we then a singular Promise and Consolation. As if he should say, The Rod of the wicked grieveth you, but be of good Comfort my People, and patiently endure it, for I will not suffer the temptation so far to prevail over you that your Confidence and trust in me shall utterly fail you. Storms and Tempests shall arise, and your Dangers shall seem so great as tho the Waves should presently swallow you up: but I will not suffer you to perish. I will bridle their Rage and make an end of the rod of the Wicked and Unrighteous, yet will I not leave you destitute of my Righteousness. Thus do Tentations teach us the true use and meaning of the first Commandment, the which none without afflictions and tentations shall rightly know or understand.

Moreover we are here admonished of the great danger that followeth these afflictions and tentations, which they that through impatiency forsake the Word and Faith, do fall into. Therefore the Lord here sheweth himself so careful for his People, least they should fall into this danger. For their state which have once forsaken the Word, is much more perillous then it was before; and into such (as our Saviour Christ pronounceth in the Gospel) do enter seven Spirits much more wicked then the first. We must therefore patiently suffer and persevere in all tentations, and rather abide all Extremities then once shrink from the Word of Life, least we be possessed with seven Spirits more wicked then the first. And moreover we must assuredly trust (as we are taught it this verse) that so long as we have a desire and purpose so to do, the Lord will never forsake us or suffer us to fall into this impiety. For here have we a manifest promise and a lively description of the Lords singular care and providence over us, namely that he is mindful of

of the end of our tentations and afflictions, so that we only continue constant and patient unto the end. And if the Heathen Poet said, Endure and reserve your selves for more happy things, how much more should Christians diligently stir up themselves with mutual Exhortations to Patience and Perseverance, whether they outwardly suffer in things pertaining to the Body and to this present life, or inwardly in Conscience. For we have a God which even in Death, in Hell, and in the midst of all our Sins, can save and deliver us.

Verse 4. *Do well O Lord unto them that be good and true of heart.*

The Prophet saith not here : Do well Lord to the perfect, and such as offend in nothing : but, *to the good and true of Heart*. The good and true of Heart, are they which are of a single, sincere and upright Heart. For these are they which are most accepted of God, altho they also through infirmity do sometimes offend. Now where he prayeth that God will do well to the good and godly, he meaneth also and secretly complaineth that the godly are in misery and affliction, and that the ungodly do abound with all worldly felicity : As we see at this day the Enemies of the Gospel to enjoy great Riches and Dignities, whereby they vex and oppress the godly. This is a great offence and stumbling-block to the godly, and therefore the Church hath need of this Prayer, That God would do well unto the godly, which trust in him, and seek his Glory with their whole Heart, that they by stumbling at this offence do not fall away to impiety. This Prayer containeth in it a Prophecy with a promise, that like as he prayeth for the Blessing, Welfare and Prosperity of the just, so at the length it shall also come to pass.

Verse 5. *But those that turn aside by their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead with the workers of Iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.*

He saith not simply, such as turn aside, but such as turn aside by their own Wickedness. For to give place to tentations by infirmity of the Flesh, or weakness of Mind, or else of Faith,
E and

and so to decline from the right way, (which cometh to pass sometimes even in the Saints, as the Example of *Peter* teacheth) is one thing, and to fall away through wickedness and perverseness of Heart, is another: which cannot be in the children of God, but properly belongeth to the wicked and godless. This sort of men hath ever corrupted the Church from the Apostles time, and with a shew of holiness hath deceived the simple, which because God punisheth them not, but spareth them and suffereth them to prosper in this World, become so proud that they will be counted amongst the holiest, and of the World are so commonly taken. We see that not only the godly are mixed with the wicked in this World, but in the Lords floore also the Wheat lyeth hidden under the Chaffe. We must pray therefore that God would bring these Hypocrites to light, and give unto them their just Punishment with the workers of Iniquity. Then shall peace ensue to the Church of God. For whilst the Lord poureth forth his vengeance upon the wicked which vex and persecute his true members, he gathered together the good and upright of Heart, and openly declareth his fatherly good will and tender love towards them.

*The Commentary of Dr. Martin Luther,
upon the CXXIX Psalm.*

They have oftentimes afflicted, &c.

The Argument of the Psalm.

THIS Psalm consisteth of two parts. In the former he giveth thanks to God for the defence and continual deliverance of the People of God. In the latter part he maketh his Prayer against the Adversaries, and in praying he prophesieth withal. Both these serve for our instruction, and also contain an Exhortation

tation to patience under the Cross, which pertaineth not to one age or time, but as the continual History of the Church doth shew, to all times, and to the whole life of man. Moreover we do here comprehend both Churches, of the *Jews*, and of the *Gentiles*, as *Paul* also in a manner joyneth them both together, when he saith, *First to the Jew, and then to the Grecian*. For as touching the Church or People of the *Jews*, it appeareth by the Histories, that they were placed in the midst of their Enemies, as a goodly Rose in the midst of Thornes. On the East side, the *Ismaelites*, the *Arabians*, and other cruel People vexed them. On the South part, the *Egyptians*, the *Ethiopians*, the *Troglodites*, the *Philistines*, and other like. On the North side, the *Assyrians*, &c. So the Church after the destruction of the Synagogue, is compassed every way with Enemies, and Christ, according to the Psalm, reigneth in the midst of his Enemies. Thus were they oftentimes and many ways afflicted. But herewithal God shewed this miracle, that when they were so afflicted, he always delivered them. And thus was the Kingdom of *Israel* a miraculous Kingdom, in that the Lord when he would correct and chastise them, suffered the *Philistines*, *Edomites*, *Moabites*, *Assyrians* and *Babylonians* to have victory over them. Again, when they seemed to be utterly oppressed, they victoriously prevailed against their Enemies. So continued this Kingdom in despite of the cruel Nations round about it, and of Satan himself: as is to be seen in the Books of the *Kings* and also of the *Chronicles*. Now, because this People had both threatnings and promises set before them, as touching their afflictions and deliverance, this was unto them a great Consolation, even when they were afflicted and spoiled, that they knew that all these things came to pass not by the Will or Power of their Enemies, and much less by their Righteousness or Deserts, but only by the Will of God thus punishing and chastising his People, yea threatening and forewarning them by the Prophets, that he would so punish the disobedient. This is no small Consolation, that in thy Affliction and Calamity thou mayest be able to say; This is the scourge of God, thus correcting me, and visiting my Sins; It is not the Wrath of God, or the merit and deserving of my Adversary.

These things must we apply unto our selves also, to the end that when we be oppressed, we may comfort our selves that we are not oppressed by the power of Death, Sin, Hell, or any creature, but by the will of God our Creator, afflicting us and punishing our Sins and ingratitude; and yet so, that he leaveth unto us this fatherly promise, that he will not forsake us. And such a figure of the whole Kingdom of Christ is set forth in the *Apocalyps*. For how much doth it speak of evil Angels, of cruel beasts, and such other Plagues of the Church, which should enter into the Church and the Kingdom of Christ, God so permitting? Notwithstanding Consolation followeth afflictions and calamities, and though the Church be never so fore afflicted, yet shall it continue and endure, and at the length shall overcome and victoriously triumph.

But this Psalm agreeth especially unto our time, wherein the Church hath been most grievously afflicted both under the *Turks* and also under the *Romish* Bishops, yea and as it were utterly abolished: So that if ye weigh the matter well, it may appear that the Condition of the *Jews* in *Babylon* was better then the state of the Church under Antichrist; where the true use of the Sacraments was taken away, the benefit of Christ darkned, faith extinguished, no true service of God used, no true good works exercised; gnerally, all things which pertain to true Religion were clean abolished, or most miserably deformed and defaced. Wherefore, like as the *Jews* in *Babylon* were put from the sight and use of the Temple, the Sacrifices, the Ceremonies, and all politick Government: so the Church under Antichrist had no true ministry, no true service of God, not her own Kingdom and Government, but was constrained to observe and keep the Heathenish Rites and Ceremonies of the Papists. Thus was the Wrath, and thus have been the Punishments of God in a manner all one, in the Church of the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*.

Wherefore it is most necessary that we lay hold upon this Consolation, that, as the Psalm saith, We are afflicted, we are cast down, we are troden under foot, but we are not overcome. For the Church shall stand and remain invincible, notwithstanding that through great incredulity and incredible infirmity, the victory thereof is hidden and cannot be seen. As it

it was under the *Pope*, where all Schools and all Churches taught nothing else but the blasphemous Doctrine of the *Romish* Bishops, and doting Dreams of the Monks. This was the very same thing that the Psalm 73. complaineth of, where it saith, *We see not our signes*: and yet God had even then his Church, although it was very little, obscure, and miserably deformed. Before the Kingdom of the *Romish* Antichrist, what a swarm of Hereticks sprang up? Of whom also the Church was sore vexed and afflicted, even as the *Jews* were afflicted of the Nations which dwelled near unto them. And like as the Captivity followed that affliction of the *Jews*, so the Kingdom of the *Romish* Bishops was that Captivity which followed the outrageous fury of the Hereticks, and out of the which also have flowed all the evils, and plagues which have been ever since in the Church, as out of a foul sink, and filthy puddle. But now by the great mercy of God the Captivity beginneth to be turned, the Temple is repaired, and the true Service of God restored.

This Psalm after my judgement, speaketh generally of all such troubles and afflictions of the Church, as have been at all times and in all ages; As first, that the Kingdom of the *Jews* when they were yet under good Kings, was mightily assailed, but yet not utterly overcome; And that the people afterwards were spoyled of the *Assyrians* and *Babylonians*, and carried away Captive, but not clean forsaken. For they were again delivered out of Captivity, and in their own land enjoyed the promise concerning Christ. Thus speaketh the Psalm first of the *Jewish Church*. Afterwards it comprehendeth as a Prophecy, the State and Condition of the Church of the *Gentiles*; to wit, that God would preserve and defend it against all Hereticks, against all the rage and fury of the World, against the Kingdom of the *Romish* Antichrist, and moreover against all the tentations of Sin, which vex and oppress the Conscience. Thus must we apply this Psalm to all times and ages of the Church, to all changes and alterations, all dangers of the World, the Flesh, Sin, the Law, Death, and the Gates of Hell. For the World assaileth it with power and wisdom; the Devil, with desperation and dubitation; Hereticks with errors in Faith and Religion, and the Conscience with Sins. In all these Perils we
say,

say, Blessed be the Lord God, who suffereth us not to be tempted above that we are able to bear. Indeed we must be tempted and tryed, but in the Tentation he will give an outscape; besides this, that he giveth us strength also to bear the Tentation until the time of deliverance come. This benefit *David* here setteth forth, and sheweth unto us the state of his people, to the end we may thereby learn this Comfort, that like as he preserved that People, even so will he also preserve us. For we have one and the same God, the same Spirit, the same Word, the same Promises, and briefly all things else whatsoever. Wherefore we may say and sing with *David*;

Verse 1. *They have oftentimes afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say:*

Verse 2. *They have oftentimes afflicted me from my youth, but they could not prevail against me.*

He nameth no certain Enemy, to the end he may comprehend all. Where he saith, from my youth, he understandeth all the time from their primitive Church (as we call it) until *Israel* began first to be the People of God. For albeit we ever praise those things which are most ancient and of greatest antiquity (as the primitive Church is indeed worthy to be praised) yet God regardeth not this difference. For in all times, and even in the last ages of the Church he gave notable Prophets, to the people of *Israel*; as before the Captivity, *Isaiab* of all other the most excellent; after the Captivity, *Aggeus*, *Zachary* and others. In the mean time between *Moyse* and these, were *Helias*, *Helizeus*, &c. So we see that the Primitive Church was more pure from Hereticks and wicked Opinions. But yet notwithstanding there were some notable Prophets and other excellent men even in the latter times. And when the root of *Jesse* seemed now to be withered, yet God raised up *Anna*, *Simcon*, *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*. For God preserveth his Church though it be never so much assailed and oppressed, according to his promise. Only let us open our eyes that we may see from whence this cometh.

And here we may not look to those things which the World especially esteemeth and magnifieth, but we must behold the Church

Church as it is afflicted, oppressed, and full of Calamity. For this is the true face of the Church of God, that it is weak, environed with all deadly Engines, and compassed with all the furies of the Devil, the World, the Flesh, Sin and Death. These things he that will not behold, but flyeth and abhorreth them, shall never find out the true Church indeed. For that is not the true picture and image of the Church which the Painters set forth, which paint her as a goodly Virgin, as a City well armed, adorned and beautified. Indeed that is a true picture, but not according to the Eyes of the Flesh. But spiritual Eyes do see this great Beauty, that Christ is her Husband, and begot her unto himself by the Holy Ghost, beautified her and made her glorious with his own blood, with his merits and with his righteousness. Of all these things the flesh can see nothing, can judge nothing, but seeth rather the contrary, how she is subject to most bitter hatred, malice, vexations and torments. Wherefore if it would paint her out in such sort as he seeth and beholdeth her, then must it paint and set her forth as a deformed and poor maiden, sitting in a dangerous Wood or Desart, in the midst of cruel and hungry Lyons, Bears, Wolves, Swine, and Venemous Serpents: also in the midst of outrageous and furious men, attempting with Sword, Fire and Water to destroy her, and to root her out from the face of the Earth. As there is in the *Apocalyps* set forth a goodly Picture, (then the which there is nothing more excellent in that book) that the Church as a desolate woman, flyeth from the old Serpent or Dragon persecuting her and her Child. Wherefore these words which *David* here useth, may very well be applied to her: *Many times have mine Enemies afflicted me, many times have they vexed me.*

Chap. 12.

But this affliction seemeth rather to be an utter Destruction, if we follow the judgment of the flesh; As if the Enemies did so prevail and overcome, that the Church were utterly oppressed and vanquished for ever: As we all find by our own Experience in our Conflicts which privately we suffer in our Hearts, when Satan terrifieth and confoundeth our Consciences. For then are raised up such terrors, that no man can otherwise judge but that the victory is Satans, oppressing us with heavy and bitter Cogitations, with Tentations, Vexations and Anguish of Spirit, and spoyling us (as to the flesh it seemeth) of all
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the sweet Consolations which by the merit of Christ and the Word are offered unto us. According to this sence we may well say, *Oftentimes have they afflicted me.* For this seemeth to be not only an affliction, but an utter Desolation and Destruction. As we privately feel this every one in our own Hearts and Consciences; so the whole body of the Church in all times doth confess, that it is vehemently assailed with strong and mighty Armies of most deadly Enemies of all Nations, and oppugned with the Engines of all Tentations and Tribulations, even from her youth, that is, from the time that when the People were delivered out of *Egypt*, they began to be known from other Nations, and to be the people of God.

But here the Church and the Children of God comfort and raise up themselves again, having good Experience that in all these Calamities God shewed forth his Power, and not only remitted their Sin, but also turned away the punishment thereof, so that still they remained a Church, and the practices of their Enemies were brought to nought. Wherefore the Prophet here, not only repeateth the danger and calamity of the Church, but with great joy he addeth withal an Exhortation, that every member of this body should praise the mercy and goodness of the Lord, and say, *They could not prevail against me.* This is a singular Consolation, not only for the whole Church of God, but also for every one of us particularly, against the proud brags of our Enemies, and the great hope which they have conceived, that they shall prevail against us. Hereticks and Sectaries do glory that they shall have the Victory. The Pope vaunting of his own strength, and the power of Princes, cryeth out; We shall overcome. Satan joyneth with them both, and raiseth up such troubles, that it seemeth doubtful to whom the victory will fall. This oppresseth, not only every man privately, with great heaviness and sorrow, but also the whole Church. As we by Experience did prove in the Assembly gathered at *Augusta*, where it seemed that our Enemies should utterly have swallowed us up. But did not we there find these words to be full of Consolation? They could not prevail. This Consolation we must hold fast even when we are killed, as by the Examples of the primitive Church we are taught. For the Church is as it were watered with the blood of the faithful, that the greater
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increase may come thereof. Now, like as these words of the Prophet are rightly applyed to that persecution which is done with the sword, so must they be applyed also to the assaults of Hereticks and Enthusiasts. For it is their property to boast and brag of the Conquest, and always to triumph before the victory. But how soever our adversaries triumph and glory, let us endeavour to hold fast the word, and whatsoever we do, let us apply it wholly to the amplyfying of the Kingdom of Christ and his word. If then (as needs it must be) assaults and battels do follow, yet let us sing with *David*, *They could not prevail*. For albeit they kill us, yet neither the Pope, nor any other hereticks, nor the Turk, nor Satan himself, shall ever be able to quench the Word: Neither yet shall they prevail against us if we stedfastly abide in the Word. Indeed this will we grant unto Satan, that he is stronger than we, and vexeth us many wayes. For many are the troubles of the just, but God will deliver them out of all. And why? Because it is the word of God which they profess and teach; and moreover it is Gods own cause which they defend. Wherefore although the Pope attempt and practise never so much mischief, and go about to stir up the whole world against us; although false brethren which walk not in true and sound doctrine, continually vex us, although Satan himself never cease to raise up the gates of hell against us, yet will we sing with *David* even to the end, *They could not prevail*; yea and that only because of the word.

Verse 3. *The Plowers plowed upon my back, and they made long furrows.*

See what unlike and almost contrary things he joyneth here together. Before he comforted the faithfull, that the enemies should never be able to do any thing against the Church, because it is invincible and cannot be overcome: and here he complayneth that they plow upon the backs of the Church, and make such furrow, as seem to be of an infinite length. This is an offence therefore which vehemently troubleth the godly, that God suffereth Satan and the world so long to rage, so long to vex and afflict the Church, that he giveth success unto their wicked counsels and attempts; that he suffereth the ungodly

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even then to prosper when they are most worthy to be punished with all manner of torments, and utterly consumed. On the other side, the godly, the more they pray, and the more they hope, the less seemeth their prayer and their hope to take effect: Every day are they more and more afflicted: every day there is less and less hope left. Wherefore this similitude is well applied unto them, in that they are compar'd to a ground which is continually plowed; wherein such furrows are drawn as seem to have no end; as though there were no God which either seeth their calamity, or the impiety and outrageous cruelty of the enemies of the word. He signifieth therefore that they have need of continual patience, not for a day or two, but all the days of their life. So that they which have the word, must assuredly purpose and determine, never to depart from God, although they should suffer the same afflictions a thousand years together. How many have we seen in these our days which have fallen away, (yea and such also as sometime did stand) when the fruit of the word was hindred through Persecution, like as the Sun dryeth up and withereth the Corn that is sown in a stony ground?

Wherefore we must learn that the patience of the faithful, as it is in this verse described, is such as is ready to offer their backs unto the Plow, and to suffer not for a day nor for a year, but for the time of their whole life. For he compareth afflictions to the long plowing on the back of the faithful: Like as our Saviour Christ also signifieth, when he saith, *He that continueth to the end shall be saved*. For to begin is not enough. And that patience which hath her bounds and limits prescribed, may be found even among the Gentiles. But the patience of Christians is perpetual, that is to say, such a patience as seemeth to be infinite and without end; for the end thereof doth not appear. Like as on the other side, the end of their consolation appeareth not. So that those things which seem to be most contrary, are here joyned together; that is to say, the length and the long continuance of the furrows on the back of the faithful, and the victory of the faithful, singing of those which drive the Plow, *They could not prevail*.

Moreover, this great and long continuance of the furrows on the back of the faithful, includeth such an offence as no carnal

nal wisdom is able to overcome; namely that the wicked do not only prosper, but their felicity also continueth long, so that it seemeth to be as a reward of their Tyranny, their persecution and malice against the Church. For if God would suffer their tyranny but for a little time, and speedily reward them according to their deserts, we should all then say that God is mindful of his children, and angry with the wicked. But now, since impiety and Wickedness flourisheth many years together, and the wicked still continue and increase in great felicity, without punishment, the same is verified of them which *Diogenes* said of *Harpalus*, That they seem to give a lively testimony against the Gods. Yea the godly are so vehemently tempted thro' this long continuance, and fall so far, that they think God hath no regard of them. Wherefore we must so arm our selves with Christian patience, that albeit we feel the tedious, and long continuance of these furrows, we be not therefore offended, but when one tentation is overcome, we must prepare our selves to another. For our backs must be always ready to bear the long continuance of these furrows.

This is the first part of the Psalm, in the which he confesseth the divine miracles and miraculous power of God, whereby he preserveth his children not onely against the world, but also against Sin, Death and the Devil, and praiseth God for that he giveth victory to those that are overcome, and putterh those to flight which do overcome. This joyfull end and this success he willeth us to look and wait for, and exhorteth us to patience. Now he turneth himself to prayer, and not only prayeth but also promiseth to the enemies of the Gospel, that although they obstinately continue in afflicting the faithful without check or punishment, yet shall their ruine and overthrow be such, that they shall never rise again; as experience doth shew. For I pray you, what Kingdom from the beginning of the world hath always continued and prospered? The places and spaces of the earth do remain void and desolate, and the Kingdoms are gone as though they had never been. Again, the cruelty and tyranny of the Kingdoms of the world was never so great, that it was able to oppress the Church. For the Church still continueth and shall continue to the end of the world, as followeth.

Verse 4. *The Righteous Lord hath cut the cords of the wicked.*

These words are so full of consolation, that to the children of God in their calamities and afflictions, nothing can be more comfortable. For they know that no munitions, no furniture of war can be so strong. First of all therefore, weigh and consider why he calleth the Lord *Righteous*, and ye shall see that he so doth, because that, when a man considereth according to the judgment of the flesh, the things which are here done, and how God governeth and ruleth the same, it seemeth no otherwise but that he is unrighteous and unjust in supporting the tyranny of the wicked with great riches, power, dignity, &c. When reason seeth this, it can judg nothing else, but that if there be a God, he is unjust. For first of all thus doth reason gather: If there be a God, he is able to resist the wicked, and utterly to destroy them. For to be a God is to be Almighty. Again, thus carnal reason argueth: If there be a God, he must needs know those things which are done in the world; for it cannot be said of God, that he is ignorant of any thing. Now what else followeth hereof, but that if God know these things to be cruelly and unjustly done, and he is able to resist them, he ought also to be no less willing to do the same. For if we think that he will not do that which he knoweth and is able to do, it must follow that he is not good, but evil; not just, but unjust. Now lay these things together. If God have power, wisdom and goodness in him; if he be able to help; if he know how, and also be willing to help; why are all these things done and governed in the world in such sort, that the wicked have power, riches & dignity, as a reward of their impiety? and contrariwise the godly for their piety and godliness are many ways and most cruelly afflicted? All these things are a lively testimony against God, as before we said of *Diogenes*. This argument of *Epicurus* and such like Atheists, is to the flesh invincible. Wherefore reason being altogether blinded and wrapped in these snares, inclineth to this opinion, That there is no God, or else that he regardeth not the affairs of men.

Of this offence and stumbling block the holy Ghost warneth us, when he attributeth this name unto God, that he is righteous,

ous, whom unrighteousness and impiety pleaseth not. Therefore although he suffer the wicked to flourish for a time, yet at the last he cutteth their cords, that is, he destroyeth both their power and them, according to that saying, *Thou art not a God that loveth wickedness.* Wherefore let Christians learn to judge, not by that which presently they feel, but by that which the word of God promiseth, and shall assuredly come to pass; to wit, That the wicked, when they have long plowed upon the backs of the faithful, and many ways afflicted them, shall perish at the length. For God is just, and his justice will not suffer the righteous to be oppressed.

Psal. 5.

Verse 5. *Let them that hate Sion be confounded and turned back,*

This (as before I have said) is a Prayer. But ye know that in every Prayer there is a Promise included, which Promise this word *Righteous* doth express in the former verse with a singular vehemency, to the end we should not murmur, or blaspheme God, as though he were not mindful of us, or had not regard of us. Now, where he saith, *Let them be confounded and turned back;* it is an exposition of that which he said before, that their cords should be cut, that is to say, their Kingdoms, their Power, their Riches, their Laws, and finally their whole polittick body and common weal should be brought to nought: as it befell to *Babylon, Ninive, Jerusalem, Athens, Corinth, Thebes, Rome,* and briefly to all these Kingdoms and Common-weales, which did not submit themselves to the Gospel. For when they proudly stretched out their necks and set themselves against Christ their King, and by their power sought to oppress him, they were destroyed. In like manner must we also pray, and certainly look for the execution of Gods vengeance upon those which at this day have set themselves against the Gospel; as the Pope and his Bishops, with all their faction, and with all the Kings and Princes of the earth which maintain and defend their impiety; for at the last they shall be confounded. But the Gospel and the Word of the Lord shall endure for ever. For the name of Christ shall never be oppressed, but being faithfully called upon, shall always be ready to help the afflicted, and shall cut the cords now of the wicked man, and now of that.

Thus the Holy Ghost comforteth us sundry ways. For when we have learned that Satan is such a Spirit as never ceaseth to tempt and to vex us, (so that when he cannot overcome us by the greatness and multitude of tentations, he goeth about to do it by the tediousness and long continuance thereof) he would have us to comfort our selves herewith, that albeit these tentations continue long, yet notwithstanding they shall have an end. And since we are forewarned both of the continuance & of the end thereof, it is the more easy for us to bear them. Here is to be noted also that he sheweth to whom he wisheth evil, namely to those which hate *Sion*. And that hatred which they bare against *Sion*, was an hatred against God. For in that Satan hateth the Church, he doth it not only in respect of men, but because he hateth God himself, whom the Church praiseth and magnifieth. Moreover, *Sion* was a place which God had chosen unto himself. Like as therefore God had chosen that place to shew his great love towards it; so had Satan chosen the same to shew his malice against it, and with all his power to vex it. In like manner, not only Satan, but also the malignant Church of the *Pope*, doth persecute us; not because we are evil in the sight of the World; for this they could well suffer, yea and would be glad if they might hear that we are Whoremongers and Murtherers as they are: But the true cause why they so deadly hate and persecute us, is this, for that it grieveth them, that we in their eyes are innocent as touching the second table, and also obedient to the first; wherein we are commanded to honour, serve, and praise the Lord; to fear him, and trust in his Mercy, &c.

Verse 6. *Let them be as the grass on the tops of the houses, which withereth afore it cometh forth.*

This is a goodly Psalm, for the sundry, excellent, and most apt similitudes contained therein, whereby the Holy Ghost painteth out those great Majesties and Principalities of the World, which fight against the the Gospel. A little before he compared them to plowers drawing out furrows of a marvellous length; to whom he so compareth them, not in this respect, as though it were granted unto them so long to abuse their power, wealth; and

and riches; but in respect of the great Tediouſness, Grief, and anguish of those which suffer the Plowers, the Furrows, the Wounds, and treading under foot; for unto them it seemeth a tedious, a long, and as it were an infinite Plowing. Wherefore they desire to be delivered, and never so little tarrying (through this tediousness and anguish of heart) seemeth to them intollerable. Against this Weariness and this Tediouſness, therefore, he comforteth the faithful with this similitude, of *grass in the top of the house*. As if he said, Why seemeth the time so long, and tedious unto thee? Why dost thou not learn to understand what these Plowers thy Adversaries be? Didst thou never see grass growing on the tops of houses? Who did ever complain that the grass flourished so long? who ever went about to pluck it up? As though it were not wont of it self to wither and vanish away. Learn therefore that the very same is the state and condition of thine Adversaries. Thus with one similitude he fighteth against another. But if a man could effectually believe that this similitude was made and here set down by the Holy Ghost, and close up the same fully in his heart; he should fear neither the Turk nor the Pope, with all his cruel Prelates, nor the Tyranny of Princes, but should condemn them all, and as little regard them as the grass on the tops of the houses.

But behold the outward shew of this grass. If any child should see it, he would esteem it to be better than any Barley, (for to Barley it is most like) since it groweth not as other things do upon the Earth, but in an higher and more notable place, and loadeth the tops of the houses. But take a man that knoweth these things, and he will say it is nothing else but a goodly shew and resemblance without any fruit. Thus hath the Holy Ghost chosen this similitude to teach us, not to wish the Tyrants may be like grass, but to know that they are indeed most like unto grass on the house tops, which withereth away before the harvest time come, or any man go about to cut it down. *Senacherib* who besieged *Jerusalem*, did flie over Kingdoms, oppressed and trod down all things under his feet: therefore he could not be counted of *Ezechia* & others like unto grass; and yet before he atchieved what he went about, he was compelled, not without great fear, and also much slaughter of his

He setteth the similitude of the grass in the house top, against the similitude of the Plowers.

Thus the Holy Ghost comforteth us sundry ways. For when we have learned that Satan is such a Spirit as never ceaseth to tempt and to vex us, (so that when he cannot overcome us by the greatness and multitude of tentations, he goeth about to do it by the tediousness and long continuance thereof) he would have us to comfort our selves herewith, that albeit these tentations continue long, yet notwithstanding they shall have an end. And since we are forewarned both of the continuance & of the end thereof, it is the more easy for us to bear them. Here is to be noted also that he sheweth to whom he wisheth evil, namely to those which hate *Sion*. And that hatred which they bare against *Sion*, was an hatred against God. For in that Satan hateth the Church, he doth it not only in respect of men, but because he hateth God himself, whom the Church praiseth and magnifieth. Moreover, *Sion* was a place which God had chosen unto himself. Like as therefore God had chosen that place to shew his great love towards it; so had Satan chosen the same to shew his malice against it, and with all his power to vex it. In like manner, not only Satan, but also the malignant Church of the *Pope*, doth persecute us; not because we are evil in the sight of the World; for this they could well suffer, yea and would be glad if they might hear that we are Whoremongers and Murtherers as they are: But the true cause why they so deadly hate and persecute us, is this, for that it grieveth them, that we in their eyes are innocent as touching the second table, and also obedient to the first; wherein we are commanded to honour, serve, and praise the Lord; to fear him, and trust in his Mercy, &c.

Verse 6. *Let them be as the grafs on the tops of the houses, which withereth afore it cometh forth.*

This is a goodly Psalm, for the sundry, excellent, and most apt similitudes contained therein, whereby the Holy Ghost painteth out those great Majesties and Principalities of the World, which fight against the the Gospel. A little before he compared them to plowers drawing out furrows of a marvellous length; to whom he so compareth them, not in this respect, as though it were granted unto them so long to abuse their power, wealth; and

and riches; but in respect of the great Tediouſneſs, Grief, and anguiſh of thoſe which ſuffer the Plowers, the Furrows, the Wounds, and treading under foot; for unto them it ſeemeth a tedious, a long, and as it were an infinite Plowing. Wherefore they deſire to be delivered, and never ſo little tarrying (through this tediousneſs and anguiſh of heart) ſeemeth to them intollerable. Againſt this Wearineſs and this Tediouſneſs, therefore, he comforteth the faithful with this ſimilitude, of *grafs in the top of the houſe*. As if he ſaid, Why ſeemeth the time ſo long, and tedious unto thee? Why doſt thou not learn to underſtand what theſe Plowers thy Adverſaries be? Didſt thou never ſee graſs growing on the tops of houſes? Who did ever complain that the graſs flouriſhed ſo long? who ever went about to pluck it up? As though it were not wont of it ſelf to wither and vaniſh away. Learn therefore that the very ſame is the ſtate and condition of thine Adverſaries. Thus with one ſimilitude he fighteth againſt another. But if a man could effectually believe that this ſimilitude was made and here ſet down by the Holy Ghoſt, and cloſe up the ſame fully in his heart; he ſhould fear neither the Turk dor the Pope, with all his cruel Prelates, nor the Tyranny of Princes, but ſhould condemn them all, and as little regard them as the graſs on the tops of the houſes.

He ſetteth the ſimilitude of the graſs in the houſe top, againſt the ſimilitude of the Plowers.

But behold the outward ſhew of this graſs. If any child ſhould ſee it, he would eſteem it to be better then any Barley, (for to Barley it is moſt like) ſince it groweth not as other things do upon the Earth, but in an higher and more notable place, and loadeth the tops of the houſes. But take a man that knoweth theſe things, and he will ſay it is nothing elſe but a goodly ſhew and reſemblance without any fruit. Thus hath the Holy Ghoſt choſen this ſimilitude to teach us, not to wiſh the Tyrants may be like graſs, but to know that they are indeed moſt like unto graſs on the houſe tops, which withereth away before the harveſt time come, or any man go about to cut it down. *Senacherib* who beſieged *Jeruſalem*, did flie over Kingdoms, oppreſſed and trod down all things under his feet: therefore he could not be counted of *Ezechia* & others like unto graſs; and yet before he atchieved what he went about, he was compelled, not without great fear, and alſo much ſlaughter of his

his souldiers, to raise his siege, and he himself most miserably perished. So *Pharaoh* seemed mightily to grow and increase, not upon the earth, but in the air and upon the house tops; but the miserable Jews were oppressed and trodden under foot like mire in the streets. This is a resemblance of grass, not withering but freshly flourishing. But how quickly did it wither and vanish to nothing? For when *Pharaoh* did verily think to oppress them, he was suddenly oppressed himself and perished in the waters.

Such an image of Tyrants and Tyranny the Holy Ghost painteth out unto us in this place. Why then shouldest thou fear? Why shouldest thou tremble? Why shouldest thou despair, as though thou hadst never seen most flourishing grass within few days to wither away of its own accord, or didst not know the nature of it to be such as cannot long continue? *Athanasius* (when *Julianus* the Emperour did many wayes afflict both him and the whole Church, and fought, not only with cruelty, but also with craft and subtilty against the faithful, insomuch that others, as it were in a terrible tempest, were utterly discouraged and past all hope of deliverance) said that this Persecution of *Julian* was not a tempest but a little cloud. Indeed his heart was full of faith which could believe, that *Julianus* was like, not to a terrible and a violent tempest, nor to a mighty black cloud wrapping all things in darkness, but unto a very little cloud, which the Sun doth quickly consume. In like manner must we also extenuate and diminish the power of our adversaries, and set at nought all their proud brags, and all their cruelty; not in respect of our own strength, but because they are of themselves nothing else but a bubble in the water, grass on the house tops, and a very shadow rather than men; besides this, that they provoke God also against themselves; whose fury & cruelty compared unto his power, is a thing more vain than grass on the house tops, or a bubble in the water; for it is nothing but a bare and a naked shew, which seemeth to be something, when indeed it is nothing. So are all the attempts of the adversaries; full of threatnings, but in the end they come to nothing.

This is the wisdom of Christians, to diminish the power of the adversaries, and contrariwise to amplify the Word and the

the mighty protection of the Lord. The Devil, Sin, Death, and other spiritual tentations are great; but a Christian can make a distinction of greatness. For greatness is understood two manner of ways: The one is according to the eye, which the eye judgeth after the outward shew; the other is according to the truth, which the truth judgeth after the Word. The greatness therefore of Sin, Death, wicked Kings, Princes, and Bishops, is that which is according to the eye only: For God which saith, *Be of good comfort, I have overcome the World*: Also, *Fear not those which can kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul*, the same God alone (I say) is the very true greatness, to which if you compare Satan, and all the fury of the whole World, what are they else but a bubble? what are they else but grass? but light straw and stubble? But when they are considered without God, then do they terrify with a false fearful shew, and seem to be great indeed.

Wherefore Christians must judge, not according to their opinion, but according to the truth. For an opinion is that which Reason bringeth forth besides the Word; but Truth is grounded upon the Word, which judgeth the fury and the cruelty of the World raging against the faithful, to be like unto grass on the house tops. This promise being settled and surely fixed in the mind, confirmeth the godly against the great power (as to reason it seemeth) of the World and Satan. Like as on the other side, where the word is not, the mind deceived thro' a terrible shew of Truth, and the judgment of Reason, is oppressed with terror. These things must not so be taken, as tho' we did utterly condemn the power of Princes, and of the World, which we count to be the creature of God; but their presumption, and the abuse of their power is it that we condemn, because they fight therewith against God and his Church. Let them be Princes on the earth; Let them use their Power and Authority in the World, but when they will needs make War in Heaven, and with their Power go about to invade and oppress the word, this is horrible, this is execrable and damnable. And who so compareth them to bubbles, to grass, to stubble, yea and to nothing, he saith truly, he judgeth rightly. For why do they fight against God? Think they that we know not what

This Judgment, that the enemies are like grass, and therefore shall perish, he calleth a promise.

God is? and what man is? what the Creature is, and what the Creator is?

Wherefore they are rightly compared to grafs on the house tops; for more contemptuously the Holy Ghost could not speak of them. For this grafs is such, that it soon withereth away before the sickle be put unto it. Yea, no man thinketh it worthy to be cut down, no man regardeth it, every man suffereth it to brag for a while, and to shew it self unto men from the house tops as though it were somewhat when it is nothing. So the wicked Persecutors in the World, which are taken to be mighty and terrible according to the outward shew, are of all men most contemptible. For Christians do not once think of plucking them up, or cutting them down; they persecute them not, they revenge not their own injuries, but suffer them to increase, to brag and glory as much as they list; For they know that they cannot abide the violence of a vehement Wind. Yea though all things be in quietness, yet as grafs on the house tops, by little and little withereth away through the heat of the Sun, so Tyrants upon small occasions do perish and soon vanish away. The faithful therefore in suffering do prevail and overcome; but the wicked in doing, are overthrown and miserably perish, as all the Histories of all times and ages do plainly witness.

Verse 7. *Whereof the Mower filleth not his hand, neither the Gleaner his Lap.*

Here the Holy Ghost maketh a comparison between Grafs which yieldeth no fruit, and true corn which is fruitful; that thereby he may the better commend unto us the former similitude, and withdraw our minds from the false dread and terror which that vain and counterfeit shew bringeth. Fruitful corn (saith he) is such, that he which moweth it shall fill his hand, and he that gathereth the sheaves shall have plenty to carry into his barn. Here ye see, is a truth, and not a vain shew. But grafs on the house tops maketh a shew of that which is not true, because it is fruitless. So the Pope and his Prelates, with other Tyrants and Persecutors, have a resemblance and a counterfeit shew that they are the Church. They hold and enjoy Dig-

Dignities, Prebends, Benefices, as grasse hath his stalk and ear ; but indeed they are none of the Chrrch, like as grasse is no Corn : for it withereth away before it can bring forth fruit.

For this is the chiefeſt argument wherewith they fight againſt us, that for this glorious ſhew whereof I ſpeak, they uſurp and challenge to themſelves the title of the Church . But we are commanded to take heed that we be not deceived by outward ſhews . Yea and we are admoniſhed alſo that ſuch ſhews are oftentimes occasions of great calamities . Beware (ſaith our Saviour Chriſt) of *False Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps-cloathing* . Alſo *By their fruits ye ſhall know them* . Whereas then they challenge unto themſelves the name of the Church, and for a goodly ſhew (which the grasse alſo that groweth on the houſe tops hath as well as they,) will be counted good Corn : this will not we grant them . For if they be good Corn, let them fill the hand of the Mower, but this they do not . They are unprofitable Grasse, yea worſe then grasse . For in that filthineſſe of their wicked luſts and fleſhly pleaſures wherewith they are horribly polluted, and that cruelty which they exerciſe againſt the true Church, they retain not ſo much as the outward ſhew which they pretend . Wherefore, ſince there is nothing to be found in our adverſaries but a naked and an hypocritical ſhew, and the ſame alſo miſerably and many ways deformed and defaced ; ſince (I ſay) there is nothing elſe in them but meer hypocrify, we judge and denounce them not to be the Church of Chriſt, but of Satan . Wherefore they are prepared as chaffe and ſtubble to the fire, although under a ſhevv and colour of the Church, they afflict and Perſecute us never ſo much .

Verſe 8. *Neither they which go by ſay, We bleſs you in the name of the Lord.*

This alſo commendeth and ſetteth forth unto us the ſimilitude of the grasse . For true Corn hath this commendation, that it is the bleſſing of God . They therefore vvich ſee it grow, vvish that God vvould bleſs and proſper it . This (ſaith *David*) ſhall not be ſaid of that grasse ; that is to ſay, of the Tyrants and the adverſaries of the Church, but rather they ſhall be curſed

of all men, yea the malediction both of God and man shall be heaped upon them: Like as it hath also hapned to the Church of Rome, which before our doctrine and preaching most gloriously flourished. But now that the Gospel hath plucked away her visour, and sheweth that she is not without fruit, all her cursed hypocrisie is bewrayed, and her memory is perish'd from among the godly. Thus the Prophet comforteth the faithful, and sheweth that the wicked (what glorious brag and pretence soever they make) are indeed nothing, and because God blesseth them not, they shall inherit nothing but malediction, and shall be confounded, like as *Judas*; the Pharisees, *Corinthus*, *Aius*, and *Pelagius*, though they seemed to flourish, most miserably perished with all their glory.

Luke 16.

Wherefore let us, whose doctrine by the grace of God is sound and agreeable with the holy Scripture, remember this similitude, that when we must suffer hatred, slander, reproaches and all manner of injuries for the Gospels sake, we are not afraid but may learn hereby to judge the Pope, the Bishops, the wicked Princes, with the tormentors and executioners of their cruelty, to be nothing else but grass on the house tops, which seemeth to be somewhat, when indeed it is nothing, and therefore it is without all blessing. To such it shall be said with the rich glutton in hell, *Son remember that thou in thy life time receivest thy pleasures*. For if we consider the whole history of the Church even from the beginning of the world, we shall see that God hath always so wrought by his secret counsel, that as grass on the house tops withereth away before the harvest come: so Tyrants are suddenly cut off and never come to their full time. Wherefore let us constantly abide and endure with patience in all afflictions, until the end do shew that it was nothing but grass, and suddenly withered when it was most like to increase and flourish. The wicked do enjoy all good things for the Churches sake, like as the grass on the house tops hath the benefit of the rain and of the Sun as well as the Corn in the fields. But as they shall not live half their days, and as they shall see their own counsels and devices to be but vain and without success, so shall they be as a perpetual shame among men: inso-much that no man shall wish any good unto them: As at this day the memory of *Judas*, *Pilate*, the wicked Jews *Dioclesianus*,
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Maximinus and other Tyrants, is without honour, yea most execrable and odious unto all men. This consolation is set forth by the holy Ghost by these gross similitudes and examples, that we may conceive in our minds some shadow or resemblance of Gods Works, since we cannot rightly judge and esteem the things themselves according to the truth, but we judge the enemies and Persecutors of the Church by their goodly shew and outward appearance, to be good Wheat, because they prosper and flourish so long upon the earth. Wherefore we must rest wholly in the Word, which with such similitudes painteth out these things; and we must with draw our senses from all outward sights and shews, and judge no otherwise of the adversaries of the word, then of most vile grass that groweth on the house tops, and is contemned of all men. For so saith the Spirit of faith: tho' our senses say otherwise.

In like manner must we do also in spiritual tentations; when our conscience accuseth us and giveth testimony against us, as well in the agony and danger of death, as in other conflicts. Here if we follow that which appeareth to reason and our own senses to be true, it shall seem unto us that our enemies are invincible and almighty, and that there is no remedy, but we must needs be overcome and utterly perish. The sight and feeling of this greatness pertaineth to the eyes and to the senses onely, and riseth of the judgment of reason, and not of the truth. But when we look to the true greatness which the word setteth forth unto us, we are constrained to say, that Death, Sin, Satan, and the very gates of hell are indeed nothing else but grass on the house tops, but stubble, but a very bubble swimming upon the water, which with the least occasion breaketh and vanisheth away. So must these things be amplified and set against all kinds of tentations, whether they be Persecutors of the Word, as the world and wicked Princes, or else Sin, Death and Satan. All which we must learn to extenuate and lessen as much as we can, because Christ liveth and we have his word. This consolation is able to swallow up all terrors, and maketh us able to say, that all these things are in very deed but one thing. But when we consider these things without the Word and Christ, in respect of our selves, and of our own strength, then are they indeed, not grass, but such
high

2 Cor. 12. 9.

high and mighty mountains as cannot be passed over. Wherefore vvhhen vve fight against our enemies, vve must fight, not as men consisting of Body and Soul, but as Christians baptized in the name of Christ, having the gift of the Spirit and the Word. Nowv therefore, vvhhen the Devil, Death, Hell it self, the World and Cruel Princes, are compared to a Christian, they are but gras upon the house tops, or if any thing can be said to be more vile and contemptible. For he hath the Word, vvhich is almighty, and moreover he hath Christ himself. Christians therefore are invincible, yea even then when they are overcome and troden under foot. For the Power of Christ is made perfect through weakness. Thus did the holy Prophets and Martyrs comfort themselves against the World and the Kingdom of Satan, and therefore they did so valiantly suffer all kinds of afflictions, being persvaded, not that the gras, vvhich vvithereth avvay of it self, vvithout mans endeavour, but the Word of God should have the victory. For true it is that *Basilus* vvriteth vvhhen he comforteth the people of *Alexandria* against the fury of *Arius*, that through the Persecutions of the Enemies, the Church doth more and more increase and multiply. Which thing vve also have proved, and God grant that yve and our Posterity may still so do.

T H E

Duty of a Good Shepherd:

B Y

Dr. MARTIN LUTHER:

Being his

C O M M E N T A R Y

Upon 1 Pet. 4. 11. and 1 Pet. 5. 1, 2, 3, 4.

1 P E T. 4. 11.

*If any man minister, let him do it, as of the ability which God
ministreth.*

WHosoever executeth any function in the Church, or hath the cure of Souls committed unto him, may not deal as he list himself, or to over-rule matters according to his own sensual Will. Neither shall he say, Tush, I am a Prelate, the people must all listen to that which I say, and observe my Laws, Ordinances, and Injunctions without gainfaying. For God requireth this, that no man minister, or do any thing, contrary or repugnant to that which he commandeth and appointeth. A Prelate or Bishop (I say) ought to do nothing in the Church, unless he be certain and sure of the warrantise thereof by Gods Word: For God cannot abide to have his service jumbled and mingled at pleasure, with every foolish Guegaw, and light trumpery. And therefore he ought to have an assurance and certainty in his mind and Conscience, that even God both speaketh and worketh in him; and to stand upon so sure a ground for
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the verity thereof, that his Faith dare boldly witness with him and say, Whatsoever I have spoken, and whatsoever I have done, or dealt herein, I am so out of doubt, that the same in each respect is consonant to the Word and Will of God, that I am ready, and dare to seal the same with my blood, and to confirm it with my Death. For otherwise, if I waver and totter this way and that way, not knowing whose cause and business I have in hand, my Faith is builded upon the Sand, so that the Devil mine Adversary, is able to shake and tumble it which way he list. And therefore we are here straightly forbidden, not to rely unto, nor to allow whatsoever Decree or Constitution these Bishops list to obtrude and enjoin, unless they stand upon a sure ground, that the things which they do, are allowed of God, yea done of God himself; and unless they be able to say, Do this, for it is the Will and Commandment of God, and we have his express Word and Commandment for our Warrant; If they be not able to say thus, they ought to be accounted as Lyars and Deceivers; much less ought any Christian to yield unto them therein any Obedience or Subscription. For, the Lord hath so appointed, that our Consciences should not elsewhere be stayed, but upon the most sure and infallible Rock. And thus much for publick functions, wherein it is not lawful for us at any hand, to follow our own wilful Devices, and sensual Concepts; nor to prescribe any rule or order to be embraced, unless we be undoubtedly assured, that it standeth with the Will and Word of God. Wherein we evidently see, how clean against the Kingdom of the *Pope*, & his mitred Bishops (as things therein are now handled) Saint *Peters* mind and Judgment was, long before any *Popes* were known in the World, to rule the roste in such Pontificality, as since they have done.

1 PET. V. 1, 2, 3, 4.

1. *The Elders which are among you I beseech, which am also an Elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ.*

HERE Saint *Peter* teacheth those that have any charge of feeding the Flock of Christ, how they ought to behave themselves. In the Chapter afore, he told that none should pre-
sume

some to teach or preach any thing, unless he were certain and assured, that the same was the sincere and pure Word of God, upon which as upon a firm and strong Rock, our Consciences may boldly stay. For this in Duty is required of us Christians, that we should be certain and know thoroughly what thing is allowed of Christ, and what is not: for they that waver in uncertainty of this knowledge, are not to be taken as Christians. He addeth also thus much, that whosoever entred into any Office or Function, should so behave himself therein, in each respect, as that he should not doubt but that God was the Author thereof. But what he here saith, peculiarly belongeth to Bishops and Ecclesiastical Pastors, wherein he teacheth them how they are to demean themselves in the Administration of their duties and charges, and what manner of persons they ought to be.

We must here further be acquainted with the Phrase and Propriety of the Tongue, wherein this Epistle was written; that we be not deceived through ignorance of the signification and force of the Word. For this Greek name *Presbuteros*, which St. Peter here useth, doth signify *An Elder*: by which Word they also are called that be Senators; that is, men excelling in Age, Gravity, Vertue, Wisdom, and Experience. After the same sort, doth Christ call his Disciples, Ministers, and Senate, to whose Office it belongeth to oversee and govern his spiritual Empire (that is, to preach and to take care of the Christian Congregation) by the name of *Elders*. And therefore marvel not a whit, neither let any thing move thee, though they which be *Elders*, be now a days called by other Titles or Names, whereof the Scripture maketh no mention at all; But not respecting the order, wherein things presently stand, weigh and conceive the matter thus: When St. Peter or any other of the Apostles, came into any City wherein Christians were, they ordained some one or other of them, such as lived honestly and unblameable, and had Wife and Children, and also skilful in the Scriptures of God, to have the Superintendency and charge over the rest. And then they called Seniors or Elders, whom afterward both St. Peter, and also St. Paul called Bishops, whereby we may note, that *Bishops* were no other, then the very same that were *Elders*.

Touching this purpose, we read in the History of St. Martin, how a certain man came unto a place in *Africa*, and there in a poor Cottage found an Elderly man, whom they thought to have been some plain Country-man. Within a while, they saw many people come flocking to him, to whom he Preached and Expounded the Word of God, whereby they perceived that he was their Pastor or Bishop. For in those days,

there was no difference either in Apparel or manners between the Bishops, and residue of Christians.

The Elders (saith St. Peter) upon whom the charge lyeth, to feed the flock of Christ with the Word of God, and to have care over them in the Lord, I exhort, which am also an Elder. Whereby it manifestly appeareth, that they whom he here nameth *Elders*, were such as laboured in the Ministry of the Word, and diligently preached the glad Tydings of the Gospel. For, such as he was that calleth himself their fellow Elder, such also appeareth it that they were. And here we see, how far he humbleth and abaseth himself, in that, he taketh not upon him the name of a Prelate, (which in respect that he was an Apostle of the Lord he might have done) but calleth himself a *Fellow Elder*, and also a witness of the Sufferings of Christ. As if he had said, *I do not only preach, but I am also among those Confessors of Christ, that are exercised in dayly Afflictions.* And withal he also sheweth that so many as be Christians, must be persecuted and suffer affliction. And this is a true Apostle of Christ, unto whom if the Pope and his Bishops were any thing like, (as they are shameless enough, to challenge to themselves the same Title) we would not greatly stick, willingly to kiss their feet.

Verſ. 1. *And also a Partaker of the Glory that shall be Revealed.*

This part of the Apostles Style and Title, is of far more excellency, then any that our *Popish* Bishops dare pretend to use. For thereby doth St. Peter take and reckon himself Holy, and a blessed Man. And altho' he perfectly knew, that he should be a Partaker of the Glory to come, yet taketh he no Pride therein, he lifteth not himself up in any swelling Glory, but modestly containeth himself within the bounds of temperate softness and courtesy.

V. 2. *Feed the flock of God, which dependeth upon you, caring for it, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind.*

Christ is the first and chiefest Pastour, who hath many Pastours under him; as he also hath many Flocks: whom being dispersed in sundry quarters of the World, he committeth to the charge and oversight of their Shepherds and Pastours, as in this Epistle of St. Peter, written into divers Countries and Regions, appeareth. But what is the charge of these Pastours to do? Forsooth, to feed the Flock of Christ. This word (*Feed*) the Pope hath raked and haled unto himself, whereby he goeth about

about to prove himself Lord and Prince of all, and that it is in our own choice and Authority, to deal with the Sheep as he listeth himself. *But* alas, who is so ignorant that knoweth not what this word (*Feed*) meaneth: To wit, that the Pastours and Shepherds ought to provide Pasture for their Sheep, and to see them have their meat in convenient and due season, whereby they may grow to be fruitful: And moreover to watch that *devouring Wolves* rush not in among them, and tear the Flock in pieces? This word (*Feed*) signifieth nothing less then to *kill* and *spoil*.

Furthermore St. Peter calleth it peculiarly *the Flock of Christ*, as tho' he should say, Think not that the Flock is any of your own, ye are but only Servants and Ministers to look unto it, ye are no Lords nor Masters over it. Contrary to the bold practice and customable dealing of many Bishops, which account and call every one within their Diocess and Jurisdiction, their Sheep. We are the Sheep of Christ, for he said afore, *Ye are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your Souls*. Bishops are the Ministers of Christ, to keep his Sheep, and to give them meat and pasture. And therefore to *Feed*, is nothing else then to preach the Gospel, wherewith their Souls may be fed, fattened and fructified, that so the Sheep may be nourished with the Gospel. This is the only and proper Office of a Bishop.

So said Christ unto Peter; *Feed my Sheep*, Joh. 21. that is, the Sheep which I commit unto thee to feed, are not *thine* but *mine*. Howbeit these words have been so canvassed and wrested by my Lord the *Pope*, that he thereby usurpeth and exerciseth an external Domination and Lordship over the Church of Christ, whereas neither he, nor any of his sacrilegious Chaplains, preacheth so much as one word of the Gospel. They brag that they have their Succession from St. Peter. If it were so, yet fear I, that it could scarcely be proved, that any *Pope* ever preached the Gospel; for none of them hath left any thing behind him, that is written and extant, wherein a man may read the Gospel. St. Gregory the *Pope* was surely an holy man; and yet the things which he preached, are not to be esteemed worth a straw; whereby it may appear, that the same See of Rome is peculiarly and specially accursed of God. I deny not, but sundry of the *Popes* suffered Martyrdom under cruel Tyrants, for the Gospels-sake, but yet there is nothing extant that was written by any of them, which is Evangelical. And yet they still brag and crack, that it is their charge to feed, whereas indeed they do nothing else but entangle, and clogge mens Consciences with Laws of their own, and

make havock and sale of mens Souls, never troubling themselves with preaching one word of Christ his sacred Gospel.

True it is, that there are many to be found, as well Women as men, which are able to preach, and that with no less Dexterity and sufficiency, then he unto whom that charge and office is peculiarly committed. But because the greatest number in the flock always is of weaklings, therefore it is expedient that some be appointed to strengthen and confirm such, and to keep back the Wolf from rushing in among them, and devouring them. For a Preachers Office and Duty is not only to feed, that is, to teach his Sheep, how they ought to frame themselves to become true and sincere Christians; but he hath the charge also to look that the Wolf be kept out, and that none of the Sheep be devoured, or seduced by false Doctrine, and so drawn into error, which is the continual drift and practice of the Devil. Now, there be many that can well enough abide to have the Gospel preached, so that there might be no exclaiming, and speaking against Wolves; I mean, so that Preachers in their Sermons, would forbear railing and taunting against Prelates. But although I preach sound Doctrine, and that which is true; and although I feed and teach (my charge) the Sheep, well and rightly; yet is not that sufficient; for it is further required at my hands, to keep the Sheep from danger, and to have a careful regard unto them, that Wolves come not among them, to drive them away out of their fertile and wholesome pastures. For to what purpose is my building, if when I have couched and orderly laid my Stones, another straitways come and throw them down as fast again, and I seeing him, forbid him not? The Wolf is well enough contented, that the Sheep be well fed, and fatted in good pasture; because the fatter they be, the pleasanter and daintier Prey thinketh he to make of them. But that Dogs should incessantly bark and baule at him, that can he not abide. And therefore it is a matter of no small weight and charge, to feed well, according as God hath given in Commandment to do; and it behooveth each one in that function carefully to consider his charge in this behalf.

The Flock (saith he) *which dependeth upon you*, that is, over which ye have charge, or which is among you, and not which is subject and lying at your feet. *Care for it, and that not by constraint, because you can no otherwise choose, but willingly; not for filthy lucre sake, but of a ready mind.* Here he comprehendeth in one word, all that which the Prophet *Ezekiel* in the 34th Chapter of his Prophecy, writeth concerning Pastors or Bishops. The meaning of this place is thus: Not only feed ye, but take ye care also and provide for them, that they want nothing, and
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where any standeth in necessity or need, there see that ye releive them: and in each respect, do the parts and duties of right *Episcopi*, that good Watchmen and faithful Espials. Look out, least danger appear, stand always prest and ready on your guard, and diligently behold and espy out of your Watch Tower, what it is that is wanting, or what is befallen unto every one within your charges. Hereby we may well perceive and know, that a Bishop is even the same which is here meant by an *Elder*. And therefore it is not true, which some say, that a Bishoprick is a Dignity, and a Bishop only he that wearerh a forked Mitre. *Episcopacy* is not a name of Dignity, but of Office: for he that is invested with that name and title, ought to look to his Flock, and to be careful for it, and to serve as a good Watchman, to see abroad, and learn what things be amiss any where within his charge. As if there be any that is weak, having his conscience wounded, him ought he to confirm, comfort and heal: if any fall, him ought he to lift up again, and so as other defects arise, to be ready to help, whereby Christian-people may be sufficiently looked unto and provided for, both in Soul and in Body. This is the reason that hath moved me therefore oftentimes to say, that if we would institute a right Christian Commonwealth, it were necessary, that in every City there should be three or four Superintendents, to take care and regard over the Church and Congregation, and to reform and restore whatsoever therein is amiss or wanting.

And here he toucheth two special Points, enough almost to terrify and discourage any man from bearing Authority over the people, or to take this great charge and burden upon him. First there be some vertuous and honest men, who half unwillingly are drawn into the Ministry and function of Preaching; for that, they see it to be a painful and laborious Office, to skout about every where, to see how the Sheep live, to succour and help them that be in want, to strengthen and raise up them that be wavering and ready to fall; and finally to have such diligent care and continual watch over them, that the Wolf find no entrance to invade and come rushing in among them; yea in that, he must not stick to lay down his life for their preservation and safeguard, And also for that it is such an hard matter of so great difficulty, truly to discharge the office of a goodly Pastor: yea of so great danger it must be thoroughly executed, and that not unwillingly, or as though it also, because were by constraint. True it is, that no man ought to intrude himself into that Office; but if he be thereunto called and required, he ought willingly to take it upon him, and to discharge and perform as much as to his function and office appertaineth.

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For they that take this matter upon them upon necessity and constraint, and have neither courage nor pleasure in the same, shall never with any profit fruitfully discharge or execute their office.

Again, there be others worse then these, which take this Office upon them for no other end but for filthy Lucre, to scrape and rake together wealth, and to pamper and cram their bellies. These fellows seek only for the Wool and the Milk of the Sheep, but as for good Pastures for them they care not; and with this Scab is the Popish Clergy horribly infected. And this is a most hurtful, dangerous noysome and filthy Vice, then which there cannot be any so dishonourable or shameful for him that taketh on him the name and charge of a Christian Bishop or Pastor. Which was the thing that caused both the Apostles, *Peter* and *Paul*, and also the Prophets, so oft to record and inculcate it. This caused *Moses* to say, Numb. 16. *I have not taken so much as an Ass from them; neither have I hurt any of them.* And *Samuel* also; *Ye know that I have not taken any mans Ox, or Ass from him, nor done wrong to any,* &c. 1 Sam. 12. For if he that hath this charge and function of feeding the Flock, be greedily given to scraping together of riches and wealth, and to gape after filthy Lucre; such an one (I say) is himself easily and soon changed from a Pastor into a Wolf.

Verf. 2. *But of a ready mind.*

That is, even with pleasure. Let the Pastor or Bishop apply his Office and Vocation, and that with a ready willingness. They that thus chearfully, promptly and zealously discharge their function, are those, which as they do their duties willingly, so do they not greedily pull the fleece from the Sheep. There be therefore two sorts of false Pastors. The one sort occupy their room grudgingly and unwillingly; the other willingly and gladly; but yet for gain and filthy Lucre.

Verf. 3. *Not as though ye were Lords over Gods heritage.*

Such are they that are willing to take the office upon them, for dignity sake, because they would live pompously and bear great sway and authority in the World. He therefore exhorteth Bishops, Eiders and Pastors, that they practise not any Lordly Tyranny over the Flock, as though the people were their Slaves and Underlings, or as though they had such authority and Lordship over them, to command what they list. For we have but one Lord, which is Christ; and he it is

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which governeth our Souls. Elders and Pastors have no further charge then to feed. And here in one word, Saint *Peter* utterly overthroweth all the Kingdoms of the *Pope*; and concludeth that no Bishop hath any authority, so much as in one word to clog and tye the conscience of the faithful to the observation of their Precepts. For they themselves ought to be Servants and Ministers, and to say, Thus saith the Lord, and these be the words of Christ; it is not we, the words are none of ours; and therefore we ought to do that which is here commanded. According to that which Christ saith; *Luke 32. The Kings of the Gentiles reign over them, and they that bear rule over them, are called gracious Lords, but ye shall not be so.* Contrary whereunto the *Pope* boasteth and braggeth saying, We ought to be Lords, and to us only belongeth to exercise chief Rule and Supream Authority.

Verf. 3. *But that ye may be ensamples to the Flock.*

Verf. 4. *And when the chief Shepherds shall appear, ye shall receive an incorruptible Crown of Glory.*

See that ye be the formost in the battle, using such honest conversation, that your life may be a Lanthorn to give light, and an example to the people, to imitate you. But our Lord *Shavelings* use to tell the people another tale, bidding them to do this and that, they themselves in the mean while leaning on their soft Cushions, and taking their ease like Lordings; laying upon us great and grievous burdens, which they themselves will not touch nor lift at with one of their fingers; not travelling any whit in Preaching the true Word of God, but rather commanding others to do that, which they themselves never did, nor ever meant to do. And yet must no man tell them thereof, for if he do, he should be sure quickly to feel the smart of it.

Again, to such Pastors Bishops, Elders and Superintendents, as here in this world did their duties faithfully, truly, sincerely, and holily; Saint *Peter* assigneth no temporal reward; as though he should say, your Office and Function is of more excellency and dignity, then that in this life it can be requited and recompenced; there is due and kept for you an Everlasting Crown, that shall be given unto you which faithfully and diligently feed the Flock of Christ. And this is the exhortation where-with Saint *Peter* encourageth them, to whom the charge and cure of Souls is committed. Whereby is manifestly concluded and proved, that the *Pope* with his Cardinals and Bishops is the very Antichrist, and
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A Commentary

and the professed Adversaries of Christ, for that they do all these, which Saint *Peter* here requires. For they neither do themselves, neither do they any thing themselves, but are wholly together in those devices and by-winders, which are most contrary therunto. They neither feed the Sheep themselves, will they suffer others to feed them; but rather place the Wolves, devouring and murdering the Flock, and make that they be Christs Vicar on Earth. Too truly (say they) they in the room and stead of Christ, being absent, and an example of the Devil: For wheresoever Christ is not, there they bear sway, and as Butcherly Tyrants reign and rule most imperiously.

It is therefore very expedient and requisite, that the Dairy and pler sort should perfectly remember this and such like places, in which they may be able to answer against that Antichristian King of the Pope, whensoever they shall be called into question and question as touching their faith; yea, thus may they well say, when they are brought unto such pinches. Behold Christ saith thus, the Pope saith one clean contrary. Christ saith yea, the Pope saith nay. They therefore thus teaching contrary and repugnant doctrine, one of them must needs lye. Now, that Christ should lye, it is impossible, and therefore it is the Pope, that is the lying Ruffian world, and not only a Devilish Liar, but even Antichrist himself. Thus oughtest thou to be furnished armed with the Scriptures, which thou mayst not only boldly call the Pope Antichrist, but also (when thou shalt so do) must plainly and easily prove that thou movest surely by the Word of God verily in these things even to the death, against the Devil and all his Infernal Army.

FINIS

